



# Library of The Theological Seminary

PRINCETON • NEW JERSEY



PRESENTED BY

The Estate of the

Rev. John B. Wiedinger

BS 1171 .B7

Brooke, Stopford Augustus,  
1832-1916.

The Old Testament and mode







THE OLD TESTAMENT

AND

MODERN LIFE



LIBRARY OF PRINCE  
JUN 2 1948  
THEOLOGICAL SEMIN

# THE OLD TESTAMENT

AND

## MODERN LIFE

BY

STOPFORD A. BROOKE



NEW YORK

DODD, MEAD AND COMPANY

1896

*Copyright, 1896,*  
BY DODD, MEAD AND COMPANY.

University Press:  
JOHN WILSON AND SON, CAMBRIDGE, U.S.A.

# CONTENTS

	PAGE
A WORD OF CRITICISM . . . . .	7
 Abraham	
I. THE CALL AND WANDERING OF ABRAHAM . . . . .	23
<i>Preached April 22, 1894</i>	
II. ABRAHAM IN EGYPT AND HIS RETURN . . . . .	39
<i>Preached May 20, 1894</i>	
III. ABRAHAM THE WARRIOR . . . . .	55
<i>Preached June 3, 1894</i>	
IV. ABRAHAM'S GLOOM AND CONSOLATION . . . . .	71
<i>Preached June 10, 1894</i>	
THE STORY OF HAGAR . . . . .	85
<i>Preached July 15, 1894</i>	
THE CHARACTER OF JUDAH . . . . .	105
<i>Preached April 26, 1885</i>	
FREEDOM FROM EGYPT, I. . . . .	127
<i>Preached March 25, 1894</i>	
FREEDOM FROM EGYPT, II. . . . .	143
<i>Preached April 1, 1894</i>	
THE DEATH OF MOSES . . . . .	155
<i>Preached February 7, 1892</i>	
THE SONG OF DEBORAH . . . . .	175
<i>Preached February 25, 1894</i>	

# CONTENTS

	PAGE
THE CALL OF SAMUEL, I. . . . .	193
<i>Preached February 21, 1891</i>	
THE CALL OF SAMUEL, II. . . . .	209
<i>Preached March 7, 1894</i>	
David	
I. DAVID, THE SHEPHERD . . . . .	225
<i>Preached January 19, 1890</i>	
II. THE COURAGE OF DAVID . . . . .	241
<i>Preached January 26, 1890</i>	
III. THE CONSECRATION OF DAVID . . . . .	255
<i>Preached February 2, 1890</i>	
Elijah	
I. ELIJAH ON CARMEL . . . . .	269
<i>Preached July 20, 1888</i>	
II. ELIJAH ON HOREB . . . . .	285
<i>Preached July 13, 1888</i>	
THE PROPHET AND PROPHECY . . . . .	301
<i>Preached October 30, 1892</i>	
THE MESSAGE TO BARUCH . . . . .	317
<i>Preached December 23, 1883</i>	
ECCLESIASTES . . . . .	335
<i>Preached January 26, 1891</i>	

A WORD OF CRITICISM





## A WORD OF CRITICISM

THE discourses which are published in this book were written on the stories which collected themselves round some of the great names in Jewish History. The earlier tales, such as those contained in the book of Genesis after the story of Abraham begins, are partly mythical, partly legendary, with a few historical kernels embedded in them. In the later stories, at least in those of them of which these discourses treat, the mythical element thins away, but the legendary survives. It was necessary, in delivering these discourses from time to time, to begin each of them with a short disquisition on the various elements, mythical, legendary, and historical, contained in the stories; and to mark, as far as possible, the various times at which different portions of the completely edited tale were composed. These critical and introductory disquisitions are omitted in this book, and the discourses enter at once into the actual matter of the stories, and into their bearing on the life of our own souls

and of the present day. But this omission forces me to explain, in a short word of criticism, how I look upon these stories, and in what way they are made the subjects of discourses, and how they can be applied to the present day and to present people. And I will beg my readers to affix this general critical statement to every discourse in this book.

(i.) Not one of the stories here treated of is taken as historically true. Some facts generally underlie them, but the older the story the less of any historical truth is to be found in it. The great patriarchal tales in the book of Genesis are prehistoric, no more historically true than the tales of Achilles, of Æneas, of King Arthur. They are ancient Sagas about national heroes; and they grew up in a similar way to that in which other heroic cycles grew up in other nations. I cannot think that their personages are wholly mythical, that Abraham or Jacob were sun-heroes, though mythical elements no doubt filtered down into the stories. Nor can I think, in spite of some modern criticism, that Joseph, Jacob, and the rest were originally only the names of tribes before they became the names of national heroes. I do not think we are licensed wholly to deny that these men may have existed as real personages, and that the stories grew out of their lives. We hold that there was an actual Agamemnon, an

actual Siegfried, an actual Charlemagne, though we do not believe that the heroic stories which gathered round them have any historical reality. Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Joseph may, then, have existed as real men, and played their part in the founding of the Jewish race; but their stories, as we have them, are as entirely legendary as those of Arthur or Siegfried, of Agamemnon or Charlemagne; and they themselves, in the stories, are legendary heroes, not historical personages.

The first tales told of them were probably in the form of short lays or narrations sung or recited from camp to camp of the wandering tribes. These were recast or added to in the course of centuries from various quarters, and by various composers, under various influences. Different kinds of legendary elements crept into them. When they were at last reduced to writing, there were two great parent documents, distinguished by the use of two different names for God, and these were again modified to support different parties or opinions in the course of Jewish history. Finally, when a literary life was well set up in the nation, and when the nation itself, being well settled, had taken its final groove, some person, most probably after the Exile, with a sense of form, and with clear national and religious ideas and aims which he manipulated into the

legends, wove them all together into one book, as Malory did for the Arthurian legends, and left us this Jewish Saga of the Patriarchs, the character of which is almost epic, the aim of which is religious and national — an aim like that of the *Æneid*, — the lessons of which are moral and spiritual; but which, beyond all these matters, is a work of art, the most valuable part of which to the Jews, and to us, is its representation of men and women with great characters, of heroes of human life, the noblest of whom is Abraham.

In his life and in the lives of the others we see clearly the two ideas by which this late writer directed the whole series of stories. The first of these was — that the Jewish nation had a glorious, even a divine origin, and that from the very beginning its nationality was destined to a world-wide greatness. Even when it was in the loins of only one man, it was conceived to be as numerous as the sands of the sea or the stars of heaven; and, still more important, in its career all nations of the earth should be blessed. The second was — that its founders were placed in the closest possible relation to God; that He looked after them, first as persons and with a father's care, and secondly as founders of a race whose religion was destined to be the religion of all mankind

These were the two great ideas emphasised by the last editor of the tales, but something further must be said with regard to his treatment of the religious idea. He brought out his own conception of God and man, in their relation each to each, more by a direction of the whole tendency of the epic tale than by any vital change wrought in the several stories he had before him. He sometimes places two accounts, which contradict one another, of the same events, side by side; as, for example, in the double narrations of the Creation and the Flood. He had, then, a certain reverence for his documents which kept him from altering them too much. He knit them together, but he left them very much as they were. As they were made at different times and places, the result is that we meet in them with varying ideas of God — ideas which frequently contradict one another, spiritual conflicting with material conceptions, ancient with modern, harsh with loving, simple with complex. We find, for example, the pure monotheistic idea of the editor side by side with the monolatrous idea of a Hebrew god who exists only as a national god more powerful than the gods of the other nations. And many other contrasts, equally striking, may be discovered. The conception, then, of God in the stories of Genesis, and indeed in the later stories, such as those of

Moses, Joshua, Elijah and the rest, varies from point to point as the period of time or of spiritual development varies at which the different songs and tales, out of which the complete history was made, were composed. The last editor, then, was chary of change, and we owe him sincere thanks for this. But, nevertheless, he was destined to give to the whole series of stories in Genesis a high religious and spiritual direction such as belonged to his own time, and he did give it. Beyond all the various views of the person and character of the Hebrew deity, we have, dominating the stories, the clear, monotheistic, spiritual idea of the editor concerning God — the God conceived of by the prophets, and embodied by the Jews after the Captivity. Perhaps, this direction was not as consciously given as I seem to make it. But if it were unconscious it would be of the same value as if it were conscious. At any rate, it is there, and is as plainly religious as it is national.

When we leave the book of Genesis and come to Moses, Joshua, Deborah, David and Elijah, we get nearer and nearer, as the dates advance, to pure history. The actual national life of the Jews begins with Moses. He certainly had a true existence. There was an actual exodus from Egypt of the Hebrews; there was a wandering, an entry into

Canaan, a slow conquest and settlement, a time of tribal governments, a concentration under David of the tribes into a nation. But the history is, in far more than half of it, mixed up with legend, with all the fancies and exaggerations of legend. A number of tales, built up in song or narrative round the history of all the leaders of the people, even as far as Elijah, filled up the outlines of their great exploits, and especially of their youth. Moreover, the religious ideas, doctrines, customs, laws, and ritual which were established in the later Jewish times, and especially after the time of the Captivity, were imputed to Moses, to the Judges, to David, and even to the later kings; things with which they had nothing whatever to do, and of which they knew nothing at all. There is, then, after Genesis, an historical basis of fact, but legend and theology have built upon it structures which are unhistorical.

(ii.) It may now be asked in what way discourses can be preached on matter which is in itself historically untrue. The answer is twofold. First, the matter is partly historical and true. We have in these stories, hidden away among legendary things and late theological and ritualistic additions, the views of the various writers of the tales concerning God and man and the relation of the one to the other. These views change, as I have said, from date to

date; but they are clear, sufficiently clear at least for critics to build up an historical relation of the development of the early Hebrew religion. We can trace its growth from the prehistoric period in Genesis to the Mosaic age, and from the Mosaic age, when history began, to the eighth century, when the age of the prophets began. And the critical story of this growth is history.

Again, these stories and the "historical books" were finally shaped and edited after the Exile, and we possess in the direction given to them, both national and spiritual, a true exposition, on which we can depend, of the spirit of the religious writers and literary men of the time at which they were edited. What they edited was sometimes mythical, more commonly legendary, but the drift they gave to it was accurately representative of the religious and national feeling of the editors. And in that we have what is historically true. In fact, we have in this creation into the stories of a religious and national unity of development under the sway of two great ideas the first attempt at a philosophy of history. These are matters full of subjects for a preacher.

Again, though the events and personages of these stories are legendary, yet the local colour, the kind of existence, the religious, moral and social temper



of the personages, the human life, with its special patriarchal, tribal and race elements, are all historical enough, even in the early tales. The imaginative picture is the picture of a manner of living which really existed. There is scarcely anything, independent of the supernatural, which is told of the lives of Abraham, Jacob, Moses or Elijah which could not have occurred or which is outside of possible truth. The events are legendary, the human life is not. Indeed, this which I say is more likely to be true of Oriental than of Western documents. The type of society in the East remains from age to age almost unchanged. The famous book, for example, which records the Arab life before Mohammed, has in it scenes, opinions, manners entirely analogous, not only to those in the book of Genesis, but also to those we may meet among the Arab tribes of the present day. This, then, is also historical, and it enables us to illuminate a discourse with true historical colour, to place the characters of the story in a veritable scenery.

Lastly, though we do not preach upon these stories as history, we do preach upon them as noble tales of human life, in the same way as we might preach on the story of Ulysses in the *Odyssey*, of Hercules in his mythical legend, of Sigurd the Volsung, or of King Arthur. Only, there is a difference which

makes the epic tale of Genesis more worthy for preaching purposes than these other stories. This is, that the Genesis stories, as well as those of David, Moses, and the rest, have received a religious direction from the final editor, and were composed into a whole by him with the intention of showing to the world a national religion which he believed was to become the religion of the whole of mankind.

Beyond this, and belonging to the original legends, the tales are full of humanity, of various characters, both of men and women, of human adventures, temptations; of the natural joys and sorrows of mankind, of youth and age and manhood, of motherhood and fatherhood, of home, of wars and peace, and of all this human life in its relation to God and the soul of man. The humanity is also far more universal than national or particular. The editor, half poet, half prophet, left, as a great genius does, the special aside, in order to dwell on that which was common to all mankind. Moreover, the materials which he used had been so purged by time (as in all the great tales) of the unnecessary, that the universality of this humanity is most delightful, and the subjects they suggest belong as much to the present day as to the days of Abraham

and David. We read our own human experience in the lives of Abraham, Moses, David, as we read it in the other great legend-stories of the world. We ignore them as history, we preach on them as humanity. These are the grounds on which these discourses were written, and this is the reason of their existence.



ABRAHAM



# I

## THE CALL AND WANDERING OF ABRAHAM

GENESIS xii. 1-9

IN this chapter of Genesis we step out of the realm of myth into something which resembles but only resembles, history. The story, which previously has been concerned with the beginning of man on the earth, with his multiplication and division, enters on a definite path and narrows down to the story of one people. Henceforth the Bible is the book of the Hebrew race. Its founders are conceived for us; their adventures are minutely told; they are given characters so strong, vivid, and distinct that they live and breathe before us. Each forms a whole, with one individuality, of whom we may make such personal friends as we make of Ædipus or Siegfried, of Antigone or Brynhild. Nor are their characters left without some historical interest in this — that their excellences and defects represent the excellences and

defects of the nation that sprang from them. In Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob we find the history of Jewish work, Jewish thought, and Jewish character. As we read the tale we might say; "The childhood of this people is the father of its manhood. Qualities are transmitted, and the characters of the patriarchs pass through all the history of the Jews." But this would assume that the characters, as here represented in the tale, were certainly the characters of historical personages. This is not true. The real fact is that, as the tale grew up, the racial characteristics of the Jews were naturally imputed to the patriarchs. It is no wonder, then, that Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob exhibit the good and evil qualities of the Jews. Those qualities were fully formed when the stories of the patriarchs grew into shape, and the stories absorbed them. We are placed, then, in this chapter, by the editor, beside the mountain well-head of the great Hebrew nation, and we prophesy the river. We see a great part of its character, and of that which it was born to bear witness to in mankind, embodied in one man. Its power of faith in the invisible, its steady trust in a mighty righteousness beyond itself, the rapid action of its faith, its obedience, its honour, its simplicity of life, its love of hardness rather than luxury, its perseverance, its unquenchable love of freedom, its



chivalry, its sense of righteous conduct as the first thing, its prayerfulness, its monotheism in its origin. All are represented in Abraham; almost all the good qualities of the people live in him, as many of its evil qualities live in Jacob and in Isaac.

But these qualities and beliefs in him represent more than the foundation of the character and the religion of a single folk, of the Hebrews alone. In them also is shown forth the foundation of the religion of a vaster range of the human race — of all Christians and Mohammedans. Therefore it is with something of a sense of awe that we stand in this story beside the source of a great people and of great religions. We see Abraham in Chaldæa, maturing in silence the inward life which was destined to fertilise the spirit of mankind, and liken him to a fountain of streams hidden deep in the womb of the hills, accumulating to itself the filtered rains of heaven till its force and volume become perennial. We see him again, suddenly called forth from Chaldæa to live a new life, and image him then by the spring breaking forth from a sudden rift and hurrying down the mountain side.

Who, standing by the rocky well, where first the waters open their way, could foretell that they would gather into them a thousand streams, and spread and widen by the deep pastures of the plains, and roll a

fuller and a fuller tide, till the broad river should call cities to its banks, and navies ride upon its breast, and the business of the world find shelter, work, and passage on its stream? And who, standing by the dark and simple tent of Abraham at Sichem and Bethel, could predict the mighty Jewish nation? Yet in both — in the man and in the stream — there was a perennial life. The stream held inexhaustible waters in its deep rock basins; the man possessed inexhaustible ideas making inexhaustible action, and handed them down in inexhaustible force from generation to generation. This is the first of them, the mightiest idea of the world when it is believed, "I am the Almighty God; walk thou before me and be thou perfect." The history of humanity rests on that conception, is developed in its development. The everlasting future of the race is held within it.

But to discuss that idea in its fulness as applicable to the development of humanity belongs to a lecture rather than to a sermon. What we want to hear of from week to week does not concern the philosophy of progress, but the daily practice of right feeling and the daily dwelling with inspiring thoughts. What we most need to think of is a noble life in the soul, and a daily life among men, lived hand-in-hand with God our Father. Therefore that on which we

dwell in this story is its spiritual side. We ask — What has this life of Abraham to say to us who are living now? What has his experience, as conceived by the writer of this story, to say to our inward life with God, and our outward life with man? What thoughts for human life does the teller of the tale send down to us across the centuries?

First, then, we are told that God spake to Abraham and bade him depart from his country and walk before Him. The writer did not, any more than the Oriental of the present day, imagine that God spoke to the outward ear. "God has spoken to me" is a common Arab phrase to-day when a man feels a deep impression on his soul. Even we use the term — a call from God, a warning from God — and many a man and woman, on whom the power of a great idea falls, has heard now, as Mohammed heard of old, the call of Abraham — "Get you forth from your father's house into another place," and hearing has obeyed.

God speaks to His children of the nineteenth century in precisely the same way as He spoke to Abraham. A duty calls us; a deep impression comes from life as we move on; a book awakes our soul; a solemn hour in nature's solitude bids us think more deeply of our doings; a hundred impulses stir us in the year, and all drive us, in different ways, towards

that which Abraham felt — “Walk thou before me and be perfect.” Who can deny that these things are so? Who can assert that he has obeyed all the demands they made?

Some hear and are moved; but others forget, and so the chances of a noble life are lost. They see the right, they desire, like the young ruler, to do the more perfect thing, but they cannot give up their ease. Or else, they cannot trust God, and therefore cannot trust themselves; or again, they cannot muster strength of will. And so, they stay in Chaldæa when they might live with God and for mankind in the mountains of Canaan. Alas! theirs is the worst sorrow of all — the sorrow of having seen the highest, and declined it.

When these voices of God come, and the image of a diviner life is vouchsafed to us, obey the voices, and pursue the image. Faith should always be victorious over fear; the actions of life should always fulfil the conception of the soul.

So by faith Abraham departed. It is plain that the writer made this call the cry of duty to him, and that the sacrifice of home to it was made by the old man without one backward look. No complaint is allotted to him, though every ancient and dear association was broken up. We read the story quietly, but a storm of human grief and struggle is

hidden beneath its simple words. This is an example that calls to us across the centuries. For we are also called to be pilgrims of the invisible in the midst of the visible. We are bid to work and love in this world, but not to be content to belong to it alone. We dare not pitch our tent in the same place always, nor linger too long in the pleasant valleys, for every year new labour calls us; and when all labour is done here, a new world beyond lies before us, where our destiny is to be finally accomplished, and the vaster part of our work to be done. We are bound to sacrifice ourselves; we must go forth in faith from our father's house, our kindred, from all we love, that is, from all the contentments of earth, to pursue the ineffable, to be perfect, to seek the city of God! Is that inhuman? No, no; it is only thus — only in self-renunciation, only in pursuit of the perfect — that we make comfort, help, content for our fellow-men, and a home for their weary spirit.

But though Abraham went forth alone and sorrowful, the great writer who told his tale did not leave him without glorious support in his adventure; and the support is the same which we are given in similar times in our life; the only support which lasts and lives and makes us conqueror. A flood of new, loving, and divine ideas had come streaming into his soul. God had given them, and the proof

that he had given them is that they were all immaterial, unworldly, and self-forgetting. It is the possession of such ideas which uplifts a man above the world, above the pride of life, above the greed and cravings of his own heart, into life for the whole race, into harmony with eternal love. That which early love, secured at last, does for our youth, the seizing of a noble and loving conception the truth of which we believe and for which we are ready to live and die, does for the older man. It re-creates the world; all things in the idea become new. The old life, dusty and weary, melts away in its morning light; sorrow changes into resolution, solitude is filled with joy; the future is peopled with a crowd of hopes that are realised in the present by faith. We are assured of the victory of love, whatever sorrow fall upon our earthly life. We possess a thing, immortal and divine, a very thought of God, living in which we live in God, living in which we know we cannot die. The earth is filled now with such ideas. Never were they more plentiful, more splendid, more inspiring, more loving. We have but to put forth our hand and take these divine creatures to our bosom; and all we need to find them by, and to live in them, and to conquer with them, is to forget ourselves and to love the world of men.

The writer of the tale makes Abraham hear two

of these ideas. He was to be the founder of a mighty people, and the conception drew him out of himself and ruled his life. "In thee shall all families of the earth be blessed." It was another mighty thought with which to fill the soul of a wandering chieftain. It carried him beyond himself into the larger interests of all mankind. "All families of the earth" was more than a merely Jewish, a merely national thought. It mingled Abraham's mind with the mind of God, the Universal Father, in whom all nations were one, and loved. It is no wonder that Jesus, who knew this phrase, and saw how clearly it was in harmony with His universal thought, said to the Jews, lost in exclusiveness: "Your father Abraham rejoiced to see my day, and he saw it and was glad." Where the teller of this tale attained that thought and how he came to give it to Abraham, I cannot say; but it was a wonderful thing for a Jew, even after the prophets had begun their work, to think of, and declare. We ourselves cannot have a higher one, nor one better fitted to rule our lives. There is not one of us who ought not, however small our influence or our business be, to say to ourselves: "In me shall all families of the earth be blessed. For that I will live and die."

Again, the story tells us that the giving of great



thoughts is the work of God. Therefore, open your heart to Him, that He may fill it with His ideas. Do not shut its doors, that you may attend only to the things of earthly care, of wealth, ambition, or pleasure. Seek first, said Jesus, the kingdom of God. Ask God to speak to you, to inspire you with the thoughts that make for love. Life changes then; we act nobly for we feel rightly, and we cannot help acting. God bloweth with His wind, and the waters flow.

Under these inspirations Abraham began a new life, utterly different from that of a settled home — a life of wandering; and it seems clear that the story-teller made out of his materials a kind of allegory of the pilgrim life of the soul, even while he believed the tale he told. So, indeed, many centuries after, it came to be considered. The writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews expressed in his symbolism of the pilgrim life of Abraham that which was universally felt, that which is felt to-day, with regard to this tale. "By faith Abraham, when he was called to go out into a place which he should afterwards receive for an inheritance, obeyed; and he went out, not knowing whither he went; for he looked for a city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God; and confessed that he was a stranger and pilgrim on the earth." The



## *THE CALL AND WANDERING OF ABRAHAM*

story brings him first to Shechem, one of the great national centres in after times of Jewish history. There the early assemblies were held, there was the place of coronations; there was the capital of the northern kingdom; there the well of Jacob, where the scene of the story of the woman of Samaria is laid. The place is consecrated to Jewish and Christian thought, but its first consecration was made in Abraham's story. It was a rich, moist valley, full of fountains and rills, and sweet with the singing of birds. The deep groves of ilex, the terebinths of Moreh, were wet with the mists that made the colouring of the vale soft and lovely, when Abraham pitched his tents in it for shelter and for water. The land was new to him; the scenery, the mode of life, were new; his ideas, his hopes, his work, were new. And here, in his first resting-place, he is made to throw all he thought at the feet of his God on the first altar of Palestine.

It is not often, and more is the pity, that in the later third of life, we begin, in these modern days, a new life. For we cling to the work of our manhood, or it clings to us, even when we are wearied with it. But some are forced into a new life, or choose it, being called of God. And to us then, wandering like Abraham into a fresh world, some of the early animation of youth is given — a quaint

clear morning air, like those days of autumn which seem to belong to spring; and the valley where we pitch our wandering tent is full of streams and of singing birds. Then, if we are not apart from Jesus Christ, if His spirit of love and worship is with us, God meets us, and speaks to us the very thing He said to Abraham in the story: "Look around you, the land is yours, I give it to you. All this new field of labour is open to you; joy and rest will be yours if you labour in it for the seed of man, if you have faith in me, the Father of men."

No matter how late in life we begin new work, we shall win its fruits, and have life and power and joy in it, if we do it believing that God has given it us to do. We are sure then of His immeasurable life behind us, and the surety gives power. We know that we cannot fail in Him, and that certainty puts life into everything we do. We are filled with His love, and our work becomes work for others in forgetfulness of self, and this is incarnate joy. Therefore, at the outset of this changed life we build in our souls an altar to the Lord of mankind and consecrate the new land to Him. And surely that is wise; for as the new life has something of youth in it, it will also have something of the dangers of youth in it, and our temptations, sins, all that we call our world, share also in the freshened

life. The strangeness of it excites, and the excitement brings new temptation with it. Experience is of little use, for of the things in it we have had no experience. We are also tempted just as if we were young, and the peril of such temptation is great, for if we fall, we have not as much power of recovery as when we were really young. Therefore, if we are sent, when two-thirds of our course is run, like Abraham, into a new life, let us dedicate it, like him, in humility and awe to God. Let us build our altar within, and call upon His name.

Lastly, the story goes on — and with it the symbolism may also go on — to tell us that Abraham was forced away from this happy place in the valley. Some trouble with the Canaanite drove him to a safer and more easily defended place in the hill-country. He set up his tent on the rocky summit of the mount of Bethel, whence, from the edge of the ilex-groves, east and west below him, he could see the land. On one side lay the rich Jordan valley, on the other his sight ranged over the fertile valley of Western Palestine, beyond Carmel to the great sea. Henceforth Abraham's life was the life of the mountains, hardy, vigorous, unenfeebled by luxury, alone with God. And there, on the top of this natural fortress, he built another altar, and called again on the name of the Lord. This was the

second step in this Pilgrim's Progress. And it is not without its symbolism.<sup>1</sup> When Abraham had settled in Sichem, he thought: "Here then I will stay and rest." The place was lovely with light and shade and streams, and there would creep into his heart the song of the lotus-eating folk: "Weary is life. I have had enough of toil. I will do no more. Slumber and rest are sweet."

Well, while the peace lasts, it is wise to enjoy it. We do not often get it in this hurried life of ours. Inward peace we may have, deep as the starry space, but not outward peace for long. So, when we can lie beneath the ilex trees, and hear the sunny streams run down the hill in music, let us take the repose, and be thankful, and remember God. For it will not endure. Were it to endure, so lazy are we, we should lose our power to grow

<sup>1</sup> "Symbolism? One may be accused of making the story into an allegory!" Well, so it is in a certain sense. It is not the facts of the life of Abraham: it is the story of Abraham as it was built up by the human mind in the process of centuries, during which time, as is the case with other great stories, that which is particular is on the whole sifted out, and that which is universally human remains. The little special events that historians love, those things which are, in their eyes, real and accurate and important, time and the human soul dismiss; and the truly important is kept — those portions of the tale which can be made into symbols of human life, into images of the soul. Time, working on the life of a great man or a great period, is never a critical historian: he is always a poet.

within and to act without; we should learn to care for ourselves and not for others, and earn in that the ruin of the soul. Therefore our Father, who loves our spiritual vigour and perfection, sends us from the rivers of Sichem to the rocks of Bethel; from our Paradise to till the land of thistles and of thorns. There is no continued repose for us until all is done. What the prophet makes God say of his Word, God says to every one of us who, each, are a Word of God: "It shall not return unto me void; it shall accomplish the thing for the which I sent it." And our best repose is, finally, in obedience to the call of "Forward," to take up our tent, and go forth to live, as Abraham lived, for those who are to come after us.

In such obedience we find the inward peace. But even that is only ours to the full when we are perfect in love, when we rejoice to do what we must do. It is uncommon for man to have that absolute joy on earth. For the most of us are driven like Abraham, without his unbroken faith, from place to place; and it is only when every earthly power is worn out, that we pass through the last strife into the peace of God — the pilgrimage closed in home, the weariness in rest.



## II

### ABRAHAM IN EGYPT AND HIS RETURN

GENESIS xii. 10; xiii

THE story of Abraham having spoken of his call and of his earliest life in Canaan at Sichem and at Bethel, now tells of his visit to Egypt, his return to Bethel, and his parting with Lot.

First, then, the tale goes that famine came into the land of Canaan, and Abraham was driven to Egypt to seek bread. It was a strange change for the patriarch, and a strange episode is bound up with it. The story brings him from his quiet pastoral life into the midst of the vastest and most citied civilisation of the world of that time, from the greatest simplicity to the greatest splendour. When he saw the mighty temples and palaces, and the sacred river rolling by pyramids and towns, vast reservoirs and multitudinous gardens, he thought of his tent on the rock of Bethel, and we can well

imagine that a grave sense of awe fell upon him — not fear, but such solemn thought as enters into a great soul when it is, after years of lonely life, brought into touch with an overwhelming crowd of humanity in a vast city. Wordsworth felt this deep emotion and well he describes it in the seventh book of “*The Prelude*,” well he brings forth its lesson to the soul.

Such a shock would shake the whole of Abraham’s life into new solution. In the multitude of questions, such as pressed on Wordsworth, Abraham might well lose for a time that steady faith in a divine leader of his life, on which the writer of the tale insists. If that were so, the episode of his conduct with regard to his wife would be natural enough at this place in the story. It is the act of a man off his balance. He feared, we are told, that when the king saw how lovely Sarah was, he himself should be slain that the king might possess her. Therefore, as Sarah was his half sister, he persuaded her to be false under the semblance of truth. “Say, I pray thee, that thou art my sister.”

Fear and falsehood for the sake of life are very common and very human; but we expected better things from Abraham. Not even the standard of the age can excuse this lie, or palliate its shame. It sinned against that very standard. It was a violation of Arab honour. And the King of Egypt,



when he found it out, blamed Abraham for not having been true to his traditional gentleness. And indeed it was a bad business. A frank falsehood which places the liar in danger, which runs the whole risk of the lie, has an element of daring in it which modifies our blame of it; but the baseness of saying one thing as truth, and meaning another which is not truth; of being true in the word and false in the thought; of lying and not taking the risk of the lie: that was the wrong of Abraham, and he knew it to be wrong.

We condemn him; but have we never coasted by his falsehood, never been wrecked on it ourselves? Have we never, through fear of ill to life, or position, answered some question in words, which, though true generally, were untrue to the particular point of inquiry? In business, politics, in society, in journalism, or money matters, how often have we told half the truth, keeping back that part which would damage ourselves, salving our conscience, as Abraham did, by weighing the half truth against the hidden lie? At every point this is a shameful thing; it is a double falsehood. There is not only the deceit that entraps the world into belief in us, but also the self-craft which, honeying over the devil himself, pretends to our own consciences that we have not told a lie. And in the end there is no kind of lie which

does more harm to men than this. It is the very lie of those false directors and false companies which have all over the business-world murdered the poor.

Abraham, again, did not risk his own life, but he risked his wife's honour. The story makes the Pharaoh reproach him with that shame. There is self-sacrifice in the lie told to save another's life. The friend who takes on him a guilt not his own, for the sake of his friend; the mother who accuses herself of treason to save her son; the man who gives his sweetheart her desire by a direct falsehood which injures himself — these suffer some inward penalty, for Truth exacts her sanctions; but the falsehood is so mixed with nobility that it loses its power to hurt mankind, and it is sometimes necessary. But to involve a woman in possible dishonour, to risk a great wrong to true love — and all for the sake of one's own life — that was a marvellous baseness to introduce into so mighty and venerable a character as Abraham's; and warns us, who are weaker than he, to watch our characters with care, lest, lured by fear of pain or death, we bring, by lying, reproach upon another. "Let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall." That is the lesson of this story, and it seems to have been much needed in the East, for a similar tale — as if it were a common case — is told again of Abraham, and

then of Isaac. In fact, it was or became a Semitic folk tale.

There is yet another interest in the tale applicable to our spiritual life. No man who had perfect faith in a divine Friend would have taken refuge in a safety of this kind. Is it not curious that Abraham (whose highest quality the story makes to be faith in God) should be made to fail, especially in that grace? It seems so, but only seems. Such a special failure is quite in accord with experience. Moses, meekest of men, is betrayed into ungovernable passion. Peter, the soldier-heart, betrays for fear his Master's love. Elijah, iron in perseverance and in fortitude, sinks into unmanly despair of life. It is true, it only happens once, but it happens terribly.

And the reason for it is not difficult to find. A man can rarely remain unconscious of his special excellence. At last he grows so secure of not failing on this side of his nature, that he leaves it to take care of itself. And then, all of a moment, his fortress is taken. The story of the taking of the Castle of Edinburgh has a thousand analogies. The defenders thought it safe where the steep precipice made its strength. All the weak portions of the walls were watched; this was not. Then, one dark night, in storm and driving rain, a band of daring

men crept slowly up the angry cliff, and the impossible became a fact. The castle was seized by the foe. And Abraham, and we, are stormed by evil at the very point where we deemed it impossible that evil could come in. Unguarded strength is double weakness. Our natural gifts and graces are the points where our greatest danger lies; and when they are overcome by evil, they are our greatest shame.

"Be sober then, be vigilant," and all the more because failure in that for which men justly praise and honour us does a great wrong to men. It injures the virtue in which we fail; it harms the causes we defend and love. "Watch and pray," said our Master, who knew the human heart, "lest ye enter into temptation." Yet the conclusion the writer puts to his story is a strange one, and seems to contradict this lesson. For it is Pharaoh who is punished, and not Abraham. Pharaoh was led into a mistake, and suffers for it. Abraham, who had done the wrong, goes away enriched. It is the way often of the course of this world; and it does not seem just. But when we look deeper, from the point of view, not of this writer, but of Jesus, we see the real truth of things. The true punishment of Abraham was within. Outwardly enriched, he was inwardly made poor. All his wealth could not put to sleep the worm which gnawed his heart. He had broken

the truth; he had failed in faith; he had been false to true love. Not punished? Imagine his shame as he returned; profound and terrible to a character like his. His conscience was not, like Pharaoh's, clear. Be sure right is done, retribution is enacted. Abraham had the worst of it. It is not in the world without, but in the world within, that the true punishments of sin are wrought.

And now, with this pain in his heart, Abraham returned to Bethel, from the quick whirl and deafening din of men to the silent rocks and the still heavens and the simple life and the altar he had made. When he saw that grassy mound again, dedicated, as the writer makes it, without an image, to the invisible and one God, how commonplace, how needless would seem to him then the vast turmoil of Egypt, its multitudinous passions and thoughts incessantly interclashing, its manifold clans of diverse gods, as he rebuilt his altar, called again on the name of the Lord, and reconsecrated his life to God, who had called him to be perfect. The quiet life brought its lessons. As he sat by the tent door, and heard the night-wind in the rocks, God spoke to him again out of the starry sky; the old religious feelings filled his soul, and he forgot the confusion of Egypt. The daily duties of a simple world purified his heart; pain passed into

healing penitence; soothing came out of the stillness of nature, and Abraham said, "God forgives; I will forgive myself. Life is yet before me; I will consecrate its work to God and my people."

So runs the tale, and so runs our life again and again. There is scarcely one of us who has not had the same experience. We have been away from our true life, in the noise and trouble of self-seeking in the world; seeing and hearing nothing but the things and the desires that pass away, pursuing wealth, pursuing vain knowledge, overdone with multitudinous interests, or with speculations so manifold about God that He seems divided into a hundred forms; living apart from the true, the simple, the useful life; loving ourselves and not others; loving wrong and not right; yielding to fear and falsehood; until, at last, in the quiet of illness, or in some silent hour among the hills or by the sea, or in some place where we once lived a simple, sacred life, we remember what we really are, what our true duties call on us to do, what love is, what blessedness there was in that clear conscience which sees that love of man is the master of being, what splendour in the soul it is to have the simple faith of God's fatherhood, and therefore of man's brotherhood. And, after a time, we have Abraham's experience. When our pain is worked through, the healing, strengthening influences have their way;

and again with a chastened heart, in the wisdom of humility, we call on the name of the Lord. We rebuild our altar; we dedicate our life again to God and man, and we break down no more. Our lesson is learned. We seek no longer the world of self. Our life is the mountain life of Abraham. For Abraham did not fail again when once more he was tempted by the world, not by fear, but by luxury. We see, when the trial came, how noble he had become.

For now, the story deepens in power and interest, and in the sculpture of a great character. A quarrel arose between the herdsmen of Lot and Abraham; and in human affairs the quarrels of servants finally involve the masters. All the world is linked together into a family, though nine-tenths of the world deny this truth. It is no use denying it, and the truth acts sharply in punishment on those who contradict it. Systematic denial of it by nations, by classes, by families, by societies, means fighting, misery, famine, desolation, cruelty, barbarism, revolution, the red flag of blood and fire and social hatred waving in the hurricane of war. The powerful in the quarrel crush the weak, until the weak, becoming powerful, crush their foes in turn. In national and social quarrels this is the way of the thing we call civilisation, the ignoble result of the principle that self-interest is the law of progress.

Never, never, will the world be at peace, nor will human progress ever move like a star, in ordered and musical advance, without haste and yet without rest, till, on the principles that the law of human progress is self-surrender and that brotherhood is the ground of all national and social action, we take, in every quarrel, the way of Abraham with Lot.

He was older than Lot. He was the better man; the father of both clans, the head of the house. At every point he had the right to choose, the right to command; and he waived every right for the sake of courtesy and peace and love. "Choose, my brother; we must part; let us part in peace. What you leave to me, I will have. I am content with that which you do not want. All I wish is your love. That is my dearest possession." At home, abroad, that is the right way of action; the right way, in my opinion, for nations, societies, and classes, in political and social troubles; the only way of progress, the root of civilisation. It is not believed, it is not done. It is the laughter of the world. But the laughter ends in the shrieking of war, and in the misery of our social systems. The time of change may come; but when it comes it will be brought about by the spirit of Abraham here, by the spirit of Jesus Christ.

These two then stood on the rocky summit of



Bethel and looked down on either side, east and west. East rose the sharp-toothed range of hills above Jericho. Beyond them lay the deep valley of the Jordan, and Lot knew, by report, of the wealthy land of the cities of the plain. Westward and southward were the naked hills of Judah, and the rocky passes where Benjamin afterwards housed like a wolf, and the range where Hebron couched—a difficult and rugged land, dwelt in by rude tribes; a pilgrim's mountain country. And here the choice was made, and the story takes a more solemn turn, and is weighty with a deeper moral, a moral driven home by the writer to the grave issues of life, and charged with a religious humanity.

Lot chose the round of the Jordan and pitched his tent towards Sodom, though he knew that the indwellers of the fertile plain were evil men and women, lost in luxury. He chose ease and comfort and prosperity with the chances of sin. But his pleasure and comfort were dearly purchased. He paid the price. His life darkened into blackness before he died; a solitary man, degraded, enervated, deceived, and all his family corrupt.

But Abraham kept the rugged mountain country, and would have kept it, even had Lot also chosen another part of it; those mountain lands, whose voice is the voice of freedom, the nurse of the manlier vir-

tues; whose winds blew strength of character into his heart, whose difficulties deepened courage, fortitude, and experience; in whose solitudes God was heard speaking to His servant. His pleasant land was not in the luxurious places of the earth. Like Mohammed, but with a gentler, humbler spirit, Abraham fixed his heart on high. "Man can have but one Paradise," said the camel driver of Mecca, as on the last spur of the rocky ridge the glorious view of the Damascus valley broke upon him, "and mine is fixed above." And he turned away. That moment settled the life of the future Prophet. This moment secured the fate and character of Abraham. Henceforth, while he did the duties of his world, he was the pilgrim of the invisible, who looked for a city that had foundations, whose builder and maker was God. And so the maker of the tale meant him to be. He had his reward. God filled his heart. He heard the almighty love and comfort speak to him; he felt God as his friend. You hear how clearly the writer puts this spiritual view. The moment Abraham chose the simple life, lofty and unreprieved, with God, the teller of the tale makes God speak to him. "Lift up thine eyes, and look from the place where thou art, northward and southward, eastward and westward: for all the land that thou seest, to thee will I give it, and to thy seed forever; and I

will make thy seed as the dust of the earth for multitude. Arise, walk through the land in the length and the breadth of it, for I will give it to thee." A spiritual reward for a spiritual act; the possession of an exalted thought — the thought of the mighty people which were to flow from him. For the country was not his, save in spiritual possession, in the thought of its belonging to his seed after him. And in that thought Abraham lived the uplifting life of faith, such faith as some of us have in the glory of the race which shall come after us and inherit the land by joy. No actual possession of the earth spoiled or tainted that life, as he wandered to and fro. No; there was not one solitary touch of the world in his heart from now until he died.

These things then — the mountain spirit with its attendant freedom, the natural simplicity of the pastoral life, wrought other fruits, such as we may justly call reward. They contributed to the up-building into finished force and charm that grave, easy, courteous, noble character, stately and strong, of sublime simplicity, which has made the world accept the phrase, that Abraham was the friend of God. Whatever else our story-teller has done, he has done this eminently. In his character of Abraham, he has uplifted our whole conception of humanity; and to do that so long ago, to hand down that great tra-

dition to the reverence and aspiration of mankind, to give this impulse and passion to men and women and children, was to do a greater and more useful thing than to make a thousand inventions for material progress. Verily, the poets and story-tellers who image forth noble and beautiful human life and character have, while they represent the true rewards of others, their one immortal and marvellous reward.

Lastly, Abraham is represented as having an outlook into the future. He felt that his race at least was immortal in God, and that God would look after it, and send it further revelations. This was all that the story-teller could probably conceive concerning his hero — a limited idea.

If Abraham were indeed a real personage, as he might well have been, and had lived in Chaldæa and Egypt, he might have had a greater hope than this — the hope of immortal life beyond the grave for man and for himself; and Christ and the Jewish Christians were so impressed with his story, that they imputed this belief to Abraham, so mighty seemed his soul to them. "Your father Abraham rejoiced to see my day, and saw it and was glad." "He looked for a better, a heavenly land," says the writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews. It may be, then, that this hero of ours, when often weary of pilgrimage he sighed and thought of rest, thought also of another land, the land of eter-

nal joy and love, where the pilgrims of earth lay down their staff and shoes, and are at home for ever. If so, it brings him nearer to us who belong to the hopes and faith of Jesus Christ.

And it is certainly true that at the time when the story was last edited, the Jews had begun to conceive the doctrine of immortality. From that, which the editor may have stolen into the story, we may draw a conclusion to our discourse fitted for a world on which a higher truth has shone in Christ than that which even the prophets saw.

When we come to the turning points of life, to the heights whence we see two ways of being — the mountain path with God, the primrose path of ease and selfish comfort — we will choose with Abraham and not with Lot. If indeed we take the choice of Lot, we shall win the world, but with it, inward weakness, solitude at the end, and, perhaps, Lot's degradation. But if we take Abraham's choice, we shall have God in the heart, friendship with the Holiest, immortal love, mighty thoughts, sweet emotions which will clothe the soul in garments wrought of the gold of divine imagination; our life will move men on to nobler ends; our character deepen into stateliness of being, into all the gifts and graces of the manhood which is divine in Jesus Christ.

And with greatness of character and God's life within, the greater faiths of Christ will slowly perfect themselves in our soul. We shall come to believe in the regenerated future of mankind. As Abraham rejoiced to see Christ's day, so shall we rejoice to see the day of the Christ which is to be. The universal life we feel true, for the whole world will finally add itself to our own life. Knowing that God is within us, we shall not be able to resist the spiritual proof of immortal being which inward likeness to God has made for us. "I cannot die," we will say in the very arms of death. "I look for a city that hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God."

### III

## ABRAHAM THE WARRIOR

GENESIS xiv

WE left Abraham at Bethel among the rocks; we find him now at the oak-grave of Mamre which is in Hebron, and there he built another altar to the Lord. This place, on the high ground above two valleys which meet below, is made by the story-teller Abraham's chief resting-place in Palestine, and near it he afterwards bought, when Sarah died, the only piece of land he called his own, the cave of Machpelah, where he buried Sarah, and where after him Isaac and Rebekah, Leah and Jacob, were laid to rest. The homely presence of the ancestral burying place made Hebron more sacred to Abraham than any other dwelling in the land. Here only, perhaps, he realised that he was not quite a wanderer and a pilgrim upon earth. All that the English squire feels when passing at morn or even through the churchyard of his native place, where his own people have been laid in honour and

in God from generation to generation, Araham felt in anticipation when, sitting in old age at his tent door, he looked on the dark rock with its caves overshadowed by the ilex grove. We know how mighty was this ancient human feeling when we remember that Jacob, in another part of the story, dying far off in a foreign land, was borne all the way from Egypt to be buried with his fathers in this piece of hallowed ground, that Joseph gave commandment that his bones, after many generations, should be placed beside his forefathers in Shechem. In such an emotion and command the Jewish patriarch and the English farmer are at one. Nay, all who know what family love and honour mean — and it is the shame of our civilisation that many cannot know it — are in every nation united in this great and sweet affection. In it, we grasp the hand of Abraham, and realise the unity and continuity of humanity. A noble thought and a power in us! one of the great and simple things on which the progress of mankind is fed; most dearly beloved by those who know that in the revelation of our Master Jesus all nations and kindreds and tongues are one, one in childhood, one in brotherhood, and one in ancestry.

Tradition still makes the place sacred to thought and feeling. The Arab name of Hebron — *El Khalil* — the city of the Friend of God, enshrines the



memory of him who was called the friend of God, and was the friend of man. A large circuit of ancient masonry still marks the spot where the great terebinth stood even in the time of Josephus, under whose shadow men said Abraham's tent was pitched, near which lay the well which fed the encampment with water, and which still affords its freshness to the parched and wearied traveller. A Mussulman mosque, a Christian church, stand even now round the entrance of the double cave of Machpelah, and at least preserve the memory of the grey fathers of the Jewish religion and our own.

Here, then, the story places Abraham; and the first striking event which enters into the tale of his life in this place is the invasion of the valley of the Jordan by some Eastern kings, and the rescue of the captives and the spoil by Abraham. It is a remarkable story, and comes nearer to the substance of history than the rest of the tale. One of the oldest records in this book, it has been inserted into the tale very much as the editor found it in the ancient manuscripts. A single exception, however, to this great age must be mentioned. It is the story of Melchisedek. This is plainly invented and introduced by an editor who wished to exalt the priesthood of Jerusalem, and to make by this legend a quasi-historical basis for the reverence and tithes

they claimed from the rest of the Jewish cities and people.

Our interest does not lie, however, in the story of the war-deed as history. Of how far the tale is true we know only a little at present. What does interest us is how the writer of this epic tale conceives the character of his hero in this dashing episode, and what were the manners of an Oriental chief in council and in war. Here, for the only time, we see Abraham as a warrior.

The kings of the East swept down on the cities of the Jordan valley which had refused to pay them tribute. They overthrew the kings of Sodom and the other towns, made them and their people captives, and carried off great spoil. Among the other captives was Lot, who now lived at Sodom. News of this came to Abraham at Mamre, and the story tells how his quiet heart leaped into flame. He called his allies together, Mamre, Eschol and Aner, chiefs of neighbouring tribes, took their counsel, gathered all his folk together, and the bands of his friends, and, without one instant of delay, pursued the northern army of the kings day and night at speed. He overtook them at Dan, far in the north of Canaan, divided his men into three companies, and in the dead of night, while his foes lay sleeping and heavy after their feast, fell upon them on three

sides, and in this splendid surprise shattered them with panic and the sword. They fled in terror past Damascus to Hobah on its north; but Abraham unwearied, and like a great general, who follows up his thunder-stroke with lightning speed, pursued them till he had rescued all the spoil, all the captives, and Lot among the rest. This was the gest of Abraham, and the legend of it was never forgotten in Israel, nor the warrior qualities displayed in it.

The moment the news from Sodom arrived, it found Abraham prepared with help. He had knit round him, by his generous conduct of life, keen and ready allies — the first thing a settler who has to defend his settlement has to do. A selfish, greedy captain, or a nation without generosity, thinking of their personal advantage alone, has no power to make faithful allies. That spirit of magnanimity which was Abraham's is the spirit which secures a settlement, and faithful comrades among a people as certainly as the mere commercial spirit destroys both. As long as England, in her colonisation of the wild countries of the earth, has men like Abraham to lead her advance, she will justly win her outlying places; but if the trading and the grasping spirit pervade her work, she will fail and deserve to fail; for then she is a curse to progress. Abraham had faithful comrades now, and they threw in their lot with him at

once. They knew their man, knew that he needed and wished for nothing for himself. It puts us in mind of a hundred stories of our great soldiers in the frontier wars of India. It makes us ask with trouble if some of our latest work in countries where we colonise, is not replacing this spirit of careless magnanimity by the spirit which is opposed to it — by that careful smallness of soul which the desire to make money engenders.

We see how indifferent and noble Abraham's action was after the battle. He had done all the work. All the spoil was his due, according to the custom of the time. The King of Sodom recognised the debt, and only begged the captives back. "Give me the persons, and keep the goods." But the great-hearted chief replied: "I have sworn, lifting up my hand, by Jehovah, the Master of heaven and earth, that I will keep nothing that is thine or thy people's; no, not so much as a thread or a shoe-latchet. Thou shalt never say that Abraham grew rich in this fashion. Only what the young men have eaten, and what the share may be of my comrades — Mamre, Aner, and Eshcol — shall be ours. That they will take, but I will take nothing."

This is the high uplifted spirit which wins the hearts of nations and of comrades; which initiates nobly, and continues splendidly, great efforts and

great causes. It is the spirit which makes a nation great and useful to the whole of humanity; which should be also at the root of our daily life, even of our daily business. It is too much overwhelmed to-day by that commercial spirit, whose theory is that self-interest is the driving-wheel of human life. Therefore, it behoves us all, if we have any real love of mankind, to make the magnanimous, and not the greedy spirit, the guide of our own personal life; to leave behind us at least the tradition that we loved honour (for this carelessness of self-interest is the root of honour) more than possessions; that when we won goods we gave them away; that when we might have claimed much and stood on our rights, we claimed nothing, no, not a shoe-string; that when we were asked to run a great risk to help another, or to give great gifts, as Abraham did to Melchisedek in order to help an ideal cause, we ran our risk or gave our goods with an open heart, despising all wealth but the welfare of others; refusing to be made rich at the expense of others, and preferring with all our heart the free, unencumbered, uncraving life of the mountain-liberty of Abraham to the life of selfish luxury which Lot lived in Sodom. This is to hand on a tradition and a spirit which will breathe strength and nobility into men from generation to generation, and which, observed by many men

in a nation, will make that people great in the hearts of its own folk and glorious in the memories of men. To live such a life is to love the human race.

Think only how this part of Abraham's character has travelled over a thousand thousand generations, and laid its power for good and for honour on them all. Every noble Jew felt it breathing in him, every generous Mohammedan feels it to this day. The whole of Christendom has loved, admired, and revered it. It has saved endless folk from the greedy spirit in the world. All the work of commerce, all the inventions of science, are as nothing in the progress of mankind, compared to the sowing of this spirit in the furrows of the field of humanity.

This is the main lesson of the tale, but it leaves another in our minds. A crisis demanding action came in Abraham's life. How does the story-teller show that he met it? Did this spirit of un-self-interest make him unpractical? On the contrary; for when a man is not thinking of his self-interest, he has time to think of what is to be done for another, at what time help is to be given, or how action is to be taken. And Abraham was striking his iron within five minutes of the tidings from the valley. He met his difficulties, first by quick counsel, then by getting his folk to stand shoulder to shoulder, and then by the swiftest action, taken on

the instant, and pursued without a pause until the deed was done.

This is what delights us in the story. The spirit of human help was in Abraham, and the hand did what the spirit called for with flying ardour. For want of this speed enterprises of great pith and moment fail. For want of this sudden fire of deed, after resolute counsel has been taken, how often have we lost the good we might have done in life; how often have we failed to help men, to deliver the captives of wrong, to rescue the spoil from the cheater, to restore peace to the family or to our society, to establish our cause for the sake of man, to win the crown of saving men! We go on taking counsel till the hour is past; we delay acting till action is of no use; or we take no counsel, and, having no wise plan, break down in action; or we act alone, not having previously made trusty and faithful comrades, not having previously gained them by proving that we want nothing for ourselves. Unsupported then, having no plan, we linger in our tent, and when we do resolve to act, it is too late. The kings of the East have reached their own country; the captives are slaves; the spoil is not rescued. The opportunity is lost.

On the contrary, at every crisis we should act like Abraham; consult quietly but at speed, knit

round us all who can act with us, and pursue day and night, with unrelaxing swiftness, till we surprise the camp where the enemy sleeps secure. The story is of actual war, and well it would be if in all our wars we had, like Nelson and a hundred other great captains, practised the tactics of Abraham; but the lesson of his action belongs to other spheres of life than war. There is indeed no crisis in the life of the world, in our own daily life, however small it be, to which it does not apply. When you have taken counsel, when you have formed your plan — put it into form, taking all the risk, with the speed of lightning; and carry it out to the end, waiting till all is over to remember weariness. We can rest when the work is done, but not till then. Self-interest often does all this for itself; but we, who are working for others, are bound all the more to do it for them.

Lastly on this point, when you have won the day, remember, if material goods have fallen to you through your act, keep none of them. Give them all away. To become more rich by doing good is scarcely possible, because to do good is to benefit others, not yourself. But to do good with the hope of becoming more rich, there is nothing baser than that. It robs your action of all its use; it makes the noble ignoble; it makes humanity ashamed of you, and of itself; it stains the virtues in the eyes



of men. Rather swear to Almighty God that you will keep nothing out of what you have gained for others, nor make any money beyond your just wage out of your reputation for good works, not a thread, not a shoe-string. Let your hands be clean, and your honour pure.

Moreover, the lesson is not apart from the spiritual world within us. It often happens that some of the inhabitants of the soul are put under tribute, and enslaved by evil forms of the passions or the appetites, and finally carried away captive. Unless we bring them back from this slavery, we are men who are maimed for life. And this crisis comes in the inward life, when revenge, hate, false love, fear, sloth, pride, avarice and violent appetite, when any one of these rises to such a height as to dominate over the whole character, to seize on all our thoughts, to subject all our feelings, to ruin the uses of life, to lead us to give up our duties to men, and to look on God as our enemy.

There is scarcely one of us who in some way or another has not been touched or mastered by this experience. Well, when the mischief has been wrought, and we are awake to it — seeing half the soul made captive and half the virtues slain — then swiftness and unremitting march are our only salvation. Let the will arise then, like Abraham, from its

sleep. Take counsel with God your Father, whose spirit dwells within you; let not one instant of delay hold you back from prayer for His power and His love to be with you. Call all the virtues, all the graces He has given you to the side of the will, call all who have not been enslaved; rally the powers of the soul to your side, knit them together in one strong effort, and act with holy swiftness against the evil thing. Pursue it night and day with unmitigated fervour, till it is conquered and slain, till all the inward powers it has taken captive are rescued and brought back to their true homes, to their true duties. Speed is everything then, unviolated speed. Delay the effort, waste your time in mourning over wrong, play with resolution, do your work gradually, and you are crippled for life, or victimised altogether by the tyrant craving or the tyrant passion. The promptitude of Abraham is, even in the inward life, the salvation of the soul.

And if — to carry the lesson into general life — there come a time in your life as a soldier of humanity and of Jesus Christ, when the cause you have supported seems all but ruined by events, when the powers of the worldly life are gathered against it, and have carried it away captive — why then, it is no time for delay. Having taken all counsel with God and yourself, march straight to your end, take every risk,

proclaim immediately on that side you stand, go with three hundred against ten thousand, go alone if need be, and be in the very heart of the crisis, master of your own will, and speeding to your purpose. What you have to save and strengthen is not yourself, what happens to you does not count. The cause, the duty, the thing God has given you to do for man, that is the only matter to be considered.

Such a crisis came to our Master Jesus. All the people had fallen away from Him. The very first principles of His mission, of His conception of the kingdom of God, had been rejected by His followers. The priestly and political parties of His nation had joined against His ideas; the whole worldly spirit was opponent to His cause. He was far away in the north of Palestine when this conviction came clearly home to His thoughts. To delay, to hang back then, would be to lose all. What did He do? He threw Himself in solemn prayer upon His Father. That tradition of His transfiguration on the slopes of Hermon embodies a real moment of His soul at this crisis of His life. He gathered His strength from God, and then, without one moment's pause, He set forth, day and night, for the centre of things, to risk everything for the cause He believed to be the redemption of the human race. Steadfastly He went up to Jerusalem. There He was slain, but there also

the great battle of humanity was won. There the captives of sin and of the world were delivered. There death rose into life of the soul of man. Ardour and prudence, swiftness and courage, met and mingled in that mighty action. And the spirit of it was the spirit of Abraham. There was not in it one trace of the desire to get good for self, but wholly to gain life for others. This is our lesson, our example, and our inspiration.

Lastly — to get back for a moment to the story itself — it is a warrior deed like this of Abraham's, done in his magnanimous spirit, which gives life, moral strength and imaginative joy to the heart of a nation, makes and keeps it great. This war legend of Abraham's burned like a fire in the soul of the Jewish people. Its tradition nerved their arms, and set their courage on fire, in all the critical hours of their fate. Its spirit entered into all their heroes. Grasping and selfish as the Jewish character is often in history, there was always in it the opposite spirit also, the spirit of Abraham's conduct to the King of Sodom.

And it is deeds like this, done in war or in civic life, which, handed down from generation to generation, have made the greatness and glory of this country, and still minister to its true life and its true uses in mankind. Grasping and selfish as our

character has often been in history, there has always been in us, and there is still, the opposite spirit — the spirit of magnanimous honour, of unselfish sacrifice, of ready help, given without reward, to the enslaved, the oppressed, and the captives of wrong. It is that spirit, and not the other, which will alone make us worthy of our history, and justly great in war and peace. Sometimes, the degraded spirit of mere self-interest seems to get the upper hand. But I will not believe that it will ever finally prevail in this ancient and noble land. The greater spirit still endures; and we have our duty to it. Our whole life should be a representation of the one and a battle against the other. We will swear before Almighty God not to grasp and keep, but to give. We will remember what the scoff which the priests and the rulers threw at Jesus Christ really means — “He saved others, Himself He cannot save.”



## IV

### ABRAHAM'S GLOOM AND CONSOLATION

#### GENESIS xv

IT is part of a great story-teller's art to vary his tale, as he moves on, in accordance with that ordinary habit of human nature which lifts and lowers alternately the moods, even the circumstances of life. The phrase, "Every valley shall be exalted, and every mountain and hill brought low," might be said of the common course of human affairs. And so it is in this tale with Abraham. After his brilliant feat of arms, after the excitement of its accomplishment, it is quite natural to find the hero of the saga in a state of depression. That is the first thing we should expect.

The next thing we should expect in any ancient tale, in order to enable and cheer the hero, especially if the tale has something of an epic quality, is the supernatural interference of the gods, a vision or a miracle. And Abraham is represented as rescued from his gloom by a vision of God in the night.

Such an interference is, in the march of a great saga, followed by the faith of the hero, and by the inward strength and quiet of the soul. So it goes in the great myths of Greece and India and Scandinavia; so it is in this noble Jewish story. Abraham passes on consoled; and though the promise is not fulfilled for many years, his heart and his life are at rest.

First, then, the gloom of Abraham. I have said that the writer of the completed story gave it, consciously or unconsciously, a special direction. He had it in his mind to answer the question: Whence and how and for what end did the people of the Jews arise? just as to answer the same question with regard to the Roman people was the aim of Virgil's epic. Up to this point in the conduct of the tale various events have already illuminated this design of the writer. But the root of them all is the promise to Abraham that he shall be the father of a mighty people, who shall possess the land in which he now wanders as a pilgrim.

And now the same design appears before us in another form. Years have passed by since the promise, and Abraham is still childless. Where is the promise? And the trouble of this doubt is made to arise in a reaction from excitement. Abraham has thought nothing of his childlessness during the passion of his pursuit of the kings and of his victory;



but now, when in the dead silence and peace he sits again inactive under the oaks of Mamre, the doubts he had forgotten in excitement recur in the reaction from excitement. "I have," he thinks, "no child; no one to succeed me, but the steward of my house, none but Eliezer of Damascus!" The child of his own loins is the pivot of his life. Its absence seems to render his life a failure, and to make God Himself a deceiver. Thus again the story places its main subject in a new light.

It is easy to compare this with our life. The experience is common enough. We have had all our energies called upon; we have had a time of vivid employment and excitement; we have won that for which we went forth upon the war-path; and now we return to quiet, uneventful life again; home after a long voyage, back to the country after a London season, back to commonplace work after an eager episode of fame or what seemed like fame, back to monotony after excitement. And a dark mood descends on us; dulness of being, deep depression. This is our reaction. And it generally takes the line of the chief aim, or the chief sorrow of our life. That thing for which we have steadily worked ever since we were young seems to us to be marked out for failure. That hope of success in business, in literature, in art which shone before us like a star

and beckoned us on, is darkened in the sky. "We are no good," we think; "our life is broken. All the ideas we had are baffled by misfortune." Or we go back and think of the great sorrows, the special troubles which are the steady distress of being — the girl whose love we missed, the friend we lost, the poverty which suddenly overwhelmed us, the son we, like Abraham, have not got, and we sink deeper and deeper into gloom. It is a common story.

How does the writer settle it? Of course, the epic needs supernatural, outward interference. God comes down to speak to His servant; and in a vision of the night, he hears the well-known voice: "Fear not, Abram; I am thy shield, and I will give thee a great reward." And the inmost sorrow of the patriarch bursts forth in his cry that he is childless. But the great Being who speaks is kind: "Thy son, thine own son, shall be thine heir. Rise and come forth with me." And, in the vision, Abraham arose, and went to the tent-door, and stood with God on the hillside, and saw above him the dark-blue vault of the Eastern sky, thick with innumerable stars. "Look up," said Jehovah, "and tell the stars, if thou be able to number them; so shall thy seed be." And Abraham believed, and was consoled.

The form of the vision was supplied by the com-

mon beliefs which belonged to the time of the writer of the story. When a Jew or Arab felt a deep impression made upon him in his trouble or doubt, whereby he felt them cleared away and his future plain, he said: "God has spoken to me;" and so vivid was his belief in this, that he visioned the form of God in dream, and woke convinced that he had seen God. This is the genesis of these stories in the Old Testament; nor are they quite apart from Western and modern life.

Is the whole thing the creation of the imagination? The apparently sensible images are. We hear no voice with the outward ear; we see no form with the outward sight. Whatever seems of the senses in these things is our own creation. But that which is not of the senses, the original reason why we feel thus, the impression made on the spirit — are these self-made? Do they come only from ourselves, or from a Spirit, a Will, and Life without us, who cares for us, and is working for us and for our true development? That is the question; and the answer that I give is that, though any apparently sensible appearance, whether in dream or in waking hours, is our own creation, the spiritual impression which has caused us to apparently materialise the vision is from without us, a direct impulse or suggestion from the loving Father of our spirits,

from the Guide and Guard of our lives. If we believe in God at all, if we believe that there is an active Love and Righteousness beyond us which has an original energy, and which loves us and desires our righteousness, it would be absurd to deny that as a Spirit He speaks to our spirit, awakens our thought to take a certain direction, kindles our feeling towards certain aspirations, impresses on us a consciousness of Himself, His character, and of how we are to live in order to be like Him in character; and roots and tends in our hearts the faith that we shall be at one with Him in an everlasting communion. This, if He be, and if He love His creatures, is the most natural thing in the world for Him to do. And this, I believe, He does, of His own good will, perform in us; and faith in it—for it cannot be proved by any process of reasoning—is the victorious principle of life.

That then which the story represents as happening to Abraham holds in it, we believe, a universal truth. The temporary and local elements which supernaturalise it here, which make it a matter of the senses, or which clothe it with merely national or with early and crude conceptions of God, are to be put aside. But the main truth that the great Spirit acts directly on the souls of those who have come from Him—that remains as true for us as it was true to the

writer of the story, as he believed it to be true for Abraham.

At one point, even the local colour is true to universal human nature. It is at night, when the noise of the day is hushed and the inward ear is attent; or in solitude, when the world and its work are far away; or in some place where the vastness and awe of the natural infinities of Nature spread unlimited before us, in the presence of the great ocean or the starry sky, that these profound impressions are chiefly made. Then we hear in our heart the Voice which is always speaking to us, and we answer, like Samuel, "Speak, Lord, Thy servant heareth."

This is no mere fancy. It has been the confessed experience of millions of men and women since the beginning of time. The records of it are multitudinous, and those who deny that any reality lies behind them have to explain them. The experience is there. It is no answer to say that so very common a thing is merely subjective. There are many persons in every congregation and outside of all congregations, whose souls have not had one single starting point out of which they might build up consolation, that is, subjectively upbuild it — who yet can say: "This which befell Abraham in the story has befallen me. I have been in deep depression. I have been at the bottom of the pit, and I

have been lifted out of it; I know not how it was, but I found life possible again. A friend came to me from without myself, and stood beside me; I have heard a voice in my soul, 'Fear not, I am thy shield; thou shalt have the promise.' And I have believed, and gone on my way, even though the dark circumstances were unchanged, in the gladness of peace." Yes; it is our Father whose direct impression on our souls has made the turning point of our deep depression. The love which never reached its earthly close; the cherished hope of a special work which was to be ours; the idea which God seemed to promise to our youth that we should fulfil, and none of which, like Abraham's heir, were born, we are somehow or other, slowly or suddenly induced to believe shall be ours in the future; if not here, then in the world to come. The time when they will be fulfilled, and the manner of the fulfilment are in our Father's hand, but we are sure that He will redeem His promise. Our love is not lost, for we have learned to love; and to be able to love, or to rejoice to love without asking for love in return, is the highest blessedness of eternal life. The special work also will be given to our hand when we are fit for it. Meantime, every hour we live in that faith is a preparation for the time when our trained energies will be let loose for it with all the joy with which a full-sailed

ship at last leaves the harbour with a favouring wind. The idea too we had, and could not shape, we shall shape at last, and for the humanity beyond the walls of earth, if not for the humanity on earth, and its seed shall be as the stars of heaven for multitude.

This is our faith, the creation of our Father's voice within our heart, and when we have gained it, we emerge as if we had been bathed in youth, out of the dark waters of depression. We pass on through life, waiting and working in peaceful hope and joy, seeing the invisible good above the evil of the world, abiding in the future while we act in the present, living in the idea and for it; hoping everything, believing everything, rejoicing in everything, and fearing nothing, least of all our God, for we love Him. This were a noble life, and this is the life which in the story Abraham lived as the Friend of God. Manifold sorrows and troubles fall upon such a man; the world is naturally against him, for the principle of his life is opposed to the transient being the important; he may have, like Jesus, to stand against society and to suffer the cross, but his faith makes him the conqueror. He endures, as seeing Him who is invisible, as knowing the joy that is set before him. And even should all his friends desert him, and he be left to die in solitude, he can say

with Jesus and it is enough to make death a triumph:  
"I am not alone; the Father is with me."

This is the main outline of the story and its lesson. A strange legend follows it, drawn from another set of materials, and of a different time and spirit. It is inserted here, from the middle to the end of the chapter. Abraham asks for a sign to confirm the promise, and the sign was arranged as it was customary in very early times to arrange matters when a treaty was made on oath. It was the habit to sacrifice beasts, "to strike the treaty," to cut them in halves, and then for the contracting parties to pass between the pieces, imprecating on themselves, perhaps, the fate of the beasts, if they broke the treaty. Abraham prepares such a sacrifice, and Jehovah, shaping His word like a smoking furnace and a burning lamp, passed between the divided beasts, and took His oath to keep the promise. Such was the vision which came when Abraham fell into a deep sleep, and the impenetrable darkness in which Jehovah was believed to dwell, encompassed him. This was a common conception of the Jewish deity, and it lasted even beyond the more spiritual days of the great prophets. Jehovah took oaths to confirm His word; He needed sacrifices to bring Him down to man, to enable Him almost to speak to man. He dwelt in a great and terrible darkness, and He



dwelt in it as a consuming fire. The eighteenth Psalm embodies this conception in magnificent poetry.

There is no need to say that this is not our conception of God, for the whole teaching of Jesus contradicts it. "God is Light, and in Him is no darkness at all," says S. John, and the phrase means the reversal of the old Jewish thought of Jehovah. He is the absolute Faithfulness, and needs not to take an oath to confirm His promise. He needs no sacrifices, not even that of His Son, to induce Him to speak to us. He is kind to us, without our prayer for His kindness. His voice is not that of the thunder and the fire; but of the gentle wind and the soft dew of words which fell from the lips of Jesus. The whole of the ancient conception belongs to a period when the terror of God was more in men's hearts than the love of Him.

A very different idea belongs to the first part of this chapter. Some have thought that there was an early patriarchal conception of God which existed before the tribes developed out of it either idolatry or monotheism, which was homelike, paternal, and simple, and utterly unlike the cruel conception of God as the national monarch of the Hebrews which arose when Israel had fought its way into existence among the other nations. This simpler religion, in which God

was the great Patriarch, is reflected, it is thought, in the early Abrahamic legends. The theory may be true, but we cannot tell. The more probable view is that the editor, living after the Exile, and when the prophets had formed their more spiritual and fatherly conception of God, believed that this conception was Abraham's, and naturally introduced it into the story. At any rate, the religious conception of God in the first part of this chapter is one of a loving Being, who takes tender care of His servant, who develops His character, and who is as spiritual a being as the God of Isaiah. Indeed, we meet here with three elements so like those of Christianity, that I dwell upon them in conclusion.

(1) "Fear not, Abraham, I am thy shield." The casting out of fear is one of the first elements of the religion of Jesus, and it is only cast out by love. When we love the Highest, we fear nothing below it; we do not fear the Highest itself. We have awe of Him and solemn reverence, but no fear. On all sides we are freed from the curse of fear. There is no fear of man or of nature, for we are in the loving hands of their Master and Maker; no fear of God, for He is our Father. This is the doctrine of Jesus; and though it is not fully given in this ancient utterance, it is there in its noble beginnings. And the world owes a great debt to those among the Jews who

here and elsewhere opposed the common view of a God who had to be approached with terror, and coaxed to lay by His wrath by sacrifices or by the coward's prayer. That double view runs throughout the whole of the Old Testament — the Priests maintaining the terror of God, the Prophets the love of God. The double view lives still. There are those who dare to make Jesus a supporter of the terrifying aspect of God. There is no lie greater than this, nor one more ruinous to religion. Every thought and act of a religion based on the fear and not the tenderness of God is a contradiction of Jesus and a curse to mankind.

(2) Abraham is to have a great reward. But it is plain that the reward is not material. He lived and died a pilgrim. He never possessed any land save a burying-place. God Himself, communion with the perfect Love, peace within, faith in his soul, mighty ideas — these are the rewards of Abraham, and they are the only rewards for which we ought to look, or which we should cherish; the only rewards which Jesus offers to our acceptance.

(3) Then see how the tenderness of God deepens. "I brought thee," God says, "out of Ur of the Chaldees, I led thee into this land; I have always been with thee. I am here with thee now to fulfil the purpose of thy life, that for which I formed, and form

thee now." Personal care, personal education, personal communion, personal love. That was the conception of the writer of the story; that was his notion of the relation of God to man. It was the deepest conviction of our Lord and Master, Jesus Christ. It may be ours, if we have Abraham's faith; and were it ours completely, this life we lead, in spite of all its pains, nay all the more because of them, were unbroken triumph; ay, more than that, were inward growth in righteousness. For there is one pregnant phrase, well worth a life's thinking, in which the writer of this tale embodies the result of his own spiritual experience, and embodies ours; the meaning of which, true and fresh to-day, is of immortal power: —

"Abraham believed God, and it was counted to him for righteousness."

THE STORY OF HAGAR



## THE STORY OF HAGAR

GENESIS xvi

THE legend of Hagar grew up whence we cannot tell; but when it became part of the epic tale of Abraham, it was either modified or used in order to explain the relationship of the Arab tribes to the Israelites, and yet at the same time to stamp them with inferiority to Israel. They were children of Abraham, that was not denied; but they were descended from a slave girl, and she was an Egyptian. Moreover, though they were free, yet their character was not so fine as that of the Hebrews. They could not grow into a nation; they had no stability, they were always fighting with one another and with the world. The blood of Abraham kept them in liberty, the blood of the slave prevented them from civilisation. Or the writer of the tale saw what the Arabs were, and emphasised in a poetic fashion the touches in the tale which accounted for, or were in harmony with, their character. A vigorous

phrase expresses this Hebrew view, embodied in this story. Ishmael is called a wild ass of a man, whose hand is against every man and every man's hand against him; and we understand all that an Israelite writer meant by that, when we read this description of the wild ass — swiftest, most untamable and freest of all beasts — which is given in the book of Job:

Who has let the wild ass go free,  
And who has loosened his bonds?  
God hath made the wilderness his home  
And the barren steppes his dwelling!  
He scorns the riches of the city.  
He has no heed of the driver's cry:  
He ranges the hills as his pasture,  
And searches out every green thing.

There is, then, no accurate history in the legend. But there is in it all the charm and all the teaching of a lovely story with a religious spirit in it. And it is delightful to pass from the close atmosphere of our overcrowded life, and to find ourselves in this simple and early world. A fresh air seems to blow in our faces, and a charm of youth to move in our hearts. We marvel at the silence and the solitude. Only a few figures animate the landscape as we stand near the pastoral encampment, and look eagerly at the larger tent, where from Abraham, Sarah, and Hagar the great Jewish and Arab races



flowed. We watch the birth of nations. The ways of life are uncomplicated; the government is patriarchal; the characters are natural and noble. Faith is the master of being. A deep impression or a new idea is the voice of God. Everything new — so small is experience — is miraculous. Whether this represent historical fact or not does not trouble us much. Whether it represent the heart of man truly, that is the question which interests us. Whether, even under crude conceptions of God's nature, it makes us feel that there is a Father who deals with the lives of His children, that is the matter which concerns us deeply. And both these interests are wholly independent of the historical truth of the story.

1. Hagar was an Egyptian and a bondwoman, and yet the story makes her subject to the intimate care of God. In an age when the slave was despised, we hear that the Lord of all did not despise her. Some have objected to the Old Testament that it does not protest against slavery; but to forbid slavery in those early times would have been too much for the uneducated conscience of the East to bear. What could be wisely done was done. A tale like this was enshrined in the sacred books. Masters and slaves heard it, and we may be certain it had its influence on both. A slave was represented as the

mother of a people; a slave twice heard the revelation of God, a slave was His personal care.

But Hagar is also made an Egyptian, and we find her, as an Egyptian, the care of God. So the writer of the tale believed that, though the Hebrews were selected to give a religion to mankind — were the chosen people — this choice did not exclude God's care of other nations. There is a conceited theory in theology that election of some means exclusion of others. It is part of the universality of this book that it does not support that theory. Election does not mean exclusion. Hagar, Pharaoh, Balaam, Job, are represented as directly taught by the God of the Jews. The stories of Naaman, of Nebuchadnezzar, of Cyrus, of Jonah and Nineveh, told the Israelites that what God was doing among them, He was doing among other nations also. God called Abraham to be the father of the Jews. But he called an Egyptian to be the mother of the Arab people. "I will make," He said, "of Ishmael a great nation."

Men spoil the whole drift of the Bible by saying that it teaches that God had only to do with the Jews. On the contrary, the prophetic teaching is that one nation was chosen in order to represent the truth, that, as God wrought on one so He was working on all, just as one day is set apart as holy to represent the truth that all days are holy. The

real lesson of the book is that God is the root of all nations; the Founder of them all; that they are His building, and their king is the King of kings.

Therefore our faith is, that when more than fourteen centuries ago, the bands of English rovers landed on the shores of Thanet, it was God who came with them to found the great English nation; therefore when more than eight centuries ago Duke William infused new blood into the English people, it was God, the Evolver of the human race, who sent him to our shores. We are as much His children as the seed of Abraham.

This is a thought which should rule all our lives as Englishmen. We are not only sons of God as persons; we are sons of God as citizens of a great country. He is the Origin of our people and their King. It was the Creator of Nations, who, in the rude warriors of the old continental England, saw hidden the noble law and lovely literature, and steady will, and unbroken courage, and energy after the unknown, and faith in the perfect, which have caused the vast outspreading of our race to establish its just influence over the upper and the under world. It is a noble inspiration to believe that all was contained in His thought who chose us for our work. Moreover, when we believe this, a divine idea knits our history together; a religion, a conscience, an aspira-

tion are given to it. A glorious aim then belongs to us as persons and as a people — the aim of comprehending and fulfilling the ideas which God gave the English people to work out in humanity. As long as we are true to this high conception we shall never decay. As long as we prefer the ideas of God in us to selfish glory and to selfish wealth, we shall endure. God has made our seed as the stars of heaven, and as the sand of the seashore for multitude. But when we forget our origin in God and the duties it involves, all our host will perish like the autumn leaves, and deserve to perish. This, from end to end of the Bible, is its steady teaching, and it is eternal truth.

2. And now for Hagar herself. Her character is drawn quite plainly in the short story, and it is not one which could be moulded without trouble to the master hand of God. Her first flight is caused by her own haughty temper. She had no kindness of thought for the long sorrow of her mistress, but we have pity when we think of those long years of marriage and long waiting for the son who was to be the source of a great people. Two passionate hearts under the grey tent dwelt ever on one thought: the mother's, to clasp a son to her milky breast, dearest desire of all to an Oriental woman; the father's, to found a mighty race, to be the father of nations, his

personal desire merged in the larger thought of mankind. Year after year went by and no less keen was the longing. Deeper grief then gathered round it; and though Abraham believed still, Sarah despaired. At last she could wait no longer; she adopted the Oriental usage and gave her slave-girl to her husband.

And Hagar conceived, and then her character emerged. She despised Sarah. It was natural enough, but it was cruel. It was more than cruel, it was mean. God had given her what her mistress had not, and she presumed on the gift to injure another's heart. She used God's kindness as a means of unkindness, that miserable thing which we so often do! Yet, she was young, she felt herself a mother, she was an untrained slave: it was all natural enough, we cannot blame her too much. Then she possessed that quick intelligence and fiery temper, formed where the glowing sun of Egypt nourishes women like Cleopatra, and we must think of this when we judge her action. Above all, the natural sense of freedom, the steady passion of it, which we find afterwards in all she did, were kindled into hope, rose almost into certainty of attainment, when she realised her motherhood. Then think of Sarah, of her heart, her thoughts, her position; bring the two women together, and we may well

imagine how high; how fierce the clashing was. And the quarrel made daily evil in the tent. The mistress used her authority and punished her servant. Abraham could scarcely take the girl's part against his life companion; and Hagar fled into the wilderness, unable to bear her life.

One would say that sorrow had poured out God's anger upon her. But it was quite otherwise. Had she continued to grow further and further into that hateful temper of pride and contempt, had she got the better of Sarah, she had been indeed a lost woman. God might have spoken to her then, and she could not have heard His voice. We cannot hear eternal love when we are cherishing the transient hatreds of the world. But now, in her feebleness and pain, when her heart was softened by solitude and sorrow, He who never forsakes us, met with her. Footsore, weary, and despairing, as she stayed her steps beside the desert fountain, she heard in her soul the voice of God. "Hagar, Sarai's maid, whither wilt thou go?" And she answered: "I flee from the face of my mistress, Sarai." Then the story tells of the trial that was given her; exactly that which was needful for her character, for her future motherhood, exactly that which would make her a noble woman. "Return, submit thyself," ask forgiveness of her whom thou hast cruelly despised;

unlearn unkindness and pride in a life which will at first be pain and grief to thy free and fiery spirit. This was a severe trial. There are few of us who would have gone back after exile and passionate words and a bitter sense of wrong. It was great-hearted of her to face the trouble again, to meet the triumph of the elder woman, to live subject to her over whom she had made her boast. But who does not see that it was the redemption of her character, that she had stepped out of wild girlhood into self-collected womanhood? It was her entrance into the strait gate; she had found the way of life.

And God did not leave her comfortless. He gave her a magnificent thought as her companion — the same as that he had given Abraham — on which, when life was hard, she could repose, from which she could draw courage and endurance. She should bear a son. Her motherhood should be complete. Nor should he be lost in the multitude. Nay, he should be the father of a multitude, and his name should enshrine for her the sympathy of God. Ishmael — “God hears” — that shall be his name. So motherhood, and the great people whom she held in her womb, and the thought of God’s tenderness went with her all the way back across the desert, and irradiated her face when again she met the frown of Sarah. What were the harsh words to her,

when her soul was companying with these exalted thoughts! And then, to have them, to cherish them within, to believe them, and to live for them — what an education for a woman, what self-development, what power, what a life above the world were hidden in their folds! Hagar was being made.

And such is the way God deals with some of us. We misuse our gifts, and we are punished by reaping what we have sown. We fly from our punishment and find ourselves in the wilderness, weary of life, stript of our pride, hungry and thirsty for rest. Then, in that hour, God meets us, and we hear His voice bidding us go back and take up our punishment, and work submissively through the duties of life. The only way to get rid of chastisement, or rather of its bitterness, and to turn it into education, is to undergo it. It is God's desire for our perfection which puts our shoulder again beneath the cross. And if we return and submit ourselves, and take up the life we have fled from, renouncing pride and contempt for loving kindness and humility, we shall gain happiness of heart when the strife is over. For the strait gate opens at last on the sunny lands, where the countenance of God is bright for His servants, and the soul is restored in his still pastures. And even if happiness of soul-



is as yet far off, strength of soul is not. Character is gained, beautiful, or noble, or serious, and in the character is communion with God our Father. Great ideas will be ours. Ishmael, "God hears me," will be the voice which will console us in our trouble. Children of our life will be given us. Our struggle for love's sake will bear fruit in others. Multitudes of acts in men and women yet unborn may flow from us. Not one grain of our submission, of our faithfulness to duty, of our endurance of chastisement, shall be lost, either in us or in our fellow-men. Thus God makes us, day by day, for this world and for the next.

3. Fifteen years have now passed away, and we hear of the second exile of Hagar. Abraham has had his son Isaac, and, on a festal day, Ishmael, inheriting his mother's early spirit, mocked the heir of the house, the darling of his mother's age. Sarah had not improved, and her pride was galled to the quick. She demanded the expulsion of the mother and the boy, and it was grievous to Abraham; but there was no chance of reconciliation, and the story saves his character by making God promise him that Hagar and Ishmael should live and be the origin of a great people. In this way the story motives his action, when in the morning the Egyptian and her boy are sent away. They

passed into the desert, and soon the merciless heat of the noonday sun blazed thirst and death on the sand and stony hills, dotted with arid shrubs and bitter flowers. Winding through this desolation, the weeping figures went their way. Sorrow makes weariness and pain; the water was spent in the bottle, for a mother cannot resist her child's cry. At last the boy could go no farther and Hagar lost all hope. Despairing surrender to fate when effort has reached a certain point—that is in the Oriental character. An English woman would have struggled onward till she died to save the lad. But Hagar laid the child in the shadow of one of the shrubs, and set her down over against him, a good way off, as it were a bowshot; for she said, "Let me not see the death of the child," and she lifted up her voice and wept.

That is beautiful. And it goes on with equal beauty. "And God heard the voice of the lad; and the angel of God called to Hagar out of heaven and said to her, 'What aileth thee, Hagar? Fear not; for God hath heard the voice of the lad. Arise, lift up the lad, and hold him in thine arms, for I will make of him a great nation.' And God opened her eyes, and she saw a well of water; and she went and filled the bottle with water and gave the lad to drink. And God was with him, and he grew and

## THE STORY OF HAGAR

dwelt in the wilderness and became an archer." The tale is told with Oriental imagery. Voices are heard; an angel speaks from heaven. But if we do not impute objective reality to these things, the spiritual humanity of the story is none the less. It came home to Hagar's heart that God had not forgotten her, that He was the ever near. And that is a revelation which has come to thousands of men and women in this world of ours. It has come home to us who worship the Father who holds us, in our hours of trouble, to His heart; and we think, as we give thanks, of the wandering woman in the desert, and realise our brotherhood with her — that everlasting fraternity of sorrow and of joy that knits us, across the centuries, to all mankind.

This was the second crisis and lesson of Hagar's life. And he who told the story knew the human heart, and the wisdom and kindness of the God whom he brought into contact with the woman's life. For, indeed, as we think of the tale, the care of God for Hagar has in it a peculiar delicacy, is full of thoughtfulness for her character. The writer who made the tale must have loved God well.

It seemed cruel that she should have been driven from her home. One would say, at first, that God is shown as hard upon her. But, if we look deeplier, it is not so. The things we think the bitterest are

often the sweetest at their core. For had Hagar remained in Abraham's tents, her life would have grown into greater misery. Sarah, now exultant, would have made her feel her slavery in a thousand ways her passionate heart could not have borne. She might have worn herself out with indignation, or sunk into apathy; her eager heart grown gray within, all the interests of life decayed into a withered common place; the slave might have become a slave in heart. So God removed her and made her the free-woman of the desert. The stain of slavery slipped away from her for ever. She became her own. Her soul drank the fresh air of a new life. Every hour her interests grew and multiplied. Her whole character expanded, and she thanked the Lord in joy.

No longer the voice said: "Return, submit;" for Hagar had learnt that lesson. Her character, strengthened by the submission, was fit to do her work in liberty. Moreover, she had her boy, and his fate was to be great. Her motherhood had the fine duty of making him worthy of his destiny. And, moreover, she knew within that this was the work of God, and she loved Him for it. Wherever she looked, whatever she did, she saw the divine Master of life, the All-seeing, whom she had met in her first exile to rebuke her and to command the

right; the Ever-near, whom she had met in her second flight to comfort and to strengthen her; and, seeing Him, life became divine, being filled with the consciousness of love. So the Oriental heart was at peace at last. And with peace, forgiveness and loving kindness crept in. The families were reconciled. Ishmael and Isaac often met, and at last stood together round their father Abraham's grave. The education of Hagar was complete. The story is rounded to its close in charity.

Her God is ours. He speaks to us as plainly as He spoke to Hagar. We have felt Him in the first crisis of our life as the All-seeing, and have obeyed His call to take up the duties of a steady life. Then many years pass by, and monotony lays its withering finger on our life. We need another shock — the shock of the afternoon of life — if we are to grow into something higher. And it comes, awakening us from the commonplace, stirring us to our centre. Cruel and bitter we think it, as we are driven into the desert, leaving behind us all the ancient loves and sorrows. We go forth, carrying with us our last hope, our last aspiration, the child of our whole life, desiring, at least, to save that from the tempest of sorrow. And the misery grows deeper, the thirst for our lost youth, our lost energy, our lost brightness. But we are stirred out

of our slavery to earth's monotonous quiet, out of our dead satisfaction with this world — stirred to the very depths. At last it seems we can bear no more. The heaven is brass to our prayer; the water is spent in the bottle. We cast away our last hope and turn aside lest we see it die.

It is then, if we have eyes to see, if our heart has still some trust, that something darts into our life which seems to open out a new being before us, if we have the courage to take it up. God makes Himself known as the Ever-near. He bids us take up the hope we have cast away, and embody it in a new life. "Arise," He cries in our heart, "I am with you. Drink of this living water. I myself will be in you a well of water, springing up into everlasting life. You are free from the slavery of the visible and the world; all the freedom of heaven is before you, all the work of earth to be done, no longer for yourself, but for me and for your fellow men. You shall be twice the man you were; and I shall be with you, even to the end of the world." And then we arise, and know that He has done all things well. Life has no more the ancient freshness of so long ago; but it has a freshness which will endure beyond the grave. It is free from false craving, the desires of the world are dead. It is a serious, a more peaceful life; but it

*THE STORY OF HAGAR*

has its own happiness, more profound and more secure than the wild happiness of old. Communion with love has made us loving, and loving makes our work eternal. And then comes death, and in the arms of that gentle friend we say: "God has been ever near to me. He will be nearer now."





## THE CHARACTER OF JUDAH



## THE CHARACTER OF JUDAH

*"Judah, thou art he whom thy brethren shall praise ; thy hand shall be on the neck of thine enemies; thy father's children shall bow down before thee."*

GENESIS xlix. 8.

THE name of Joseph, first among the sons of Jacob, at the beginning of their nation, grows pale as history advances, before the name of Judah. Even the great word Israel dies before it. It is the Jews, the men of Judah, that fill the records of the world. The song of Jacob and the blessing of his sons, at whatever date inserted in the book of Genesis, contain that which was then thought of the pre-eminence of Judah—"Thou art he whom thy brethren shall praise. He couched, he lay down as a lion, as a young lion ; who shall stir him up ? " Only the king of beasts could be his fitting symbol.

It was not long before the tribe rose into leadership ; for though we cannot allot historical accuracy to the history in the Pentateuch, yet enough is plain

to allow us to give a high eminence to the tribe of Judah. Of all who left Egypt, we are told it was the most numerous. To it in the wilderness, when the twelve tribes were divided into four camps, was given the eastern position towards the rising sun, and it led the march. The first romantic story of the land of Canaan belongs to its history. Caleb, the friend of Joshua, the only one with Joshua who, the story says, survived the wilderness, was the first who made the great tribe famous; and he chose Hebron and its valley for his conquest. The choice itself was full of meaning; for in Hebron lay the only spot which in the whole land the Jews could claim as theirs from the beginning, the little field of Machpelah that Abraham bought, where he and Isaac and Jacob lay at rest. The most sacred place in the heart of Israel was claimed and won by hard fighting by the tribe of Judah, and Caleb's name was given to the land. A story like one in a mediæval romance links itself to this conquest. Kirjathsepher, a sacred town, the town of the oracle, lay south of Hebron. Caleb resolved to have it, and he offered his daughter Achsah as the prize of the man who should take it. And Othniel his nephew arose, and went forth and took the fortress. Then Achsah came to Othniel led by her father. But the women of Judah were as romantic as the

## *THE CHARACTER OF JUDAH*

men. Close to the place where her lover had won her with a strong hand, lay a valley, rich in grass, watered by a bubbling stream that rose at the height of the glen and fell down to its lowest end. Achsah, worthy of her tribe, set her heart on this. She would not enter her husband's house, nor light off her ass, till she won the blessing of the green vale with its upper and its lower streams: and father and husband took it for her. Men and women alike in this tribe were warrior-hearted. It seems they even gained the great hill city of Jerusalem for a time, though its full conquest was reserved for him to whom best belonged the name of the lion of the tribe of Judah. Round about Hebron they settled down, in a rich land of pasture and vine. The grass was deep for flocks, and on its terraces, where the ancient vine-presses are still seen in the rock, grew more plentifully than elsewhere the Syrian golden grape; and the words of Jacob's song were true: "Judah bound his foal unto the vine, and his ass's colt to the choice vine; he washed his garments in wine and his clothes in the blood of grapes; his eyes were red with wine and his teeth white with milk."

In the midst of this land arose afterwards the greatest genius and king that Israel had seen, David of Bethlehem, the lion of the tribe. Poet, musician, freebooter, warrior, ruler, he wrought the tribes into

one nation. He took Jerusalem and gave the kingdom a capital city within the bounds of his own tribe. He centred there religion and law. Beneath his sway captive nations bent, and Jehovah became the Lord of Hosts; and on the day when in proud procession up the heights of Zion the hymn was sung, "Lift up your heads, oh, ye gates, that the King of Glory may come in," the words, "Judah, thou art he whom thy brethren shall praise," received their highest historical meaning. Then came the division of the kingdom after Solomon's death; and, in a few generations, the fall of Samaria before Assyria left Judah alone. Into it gathered the whole of the national spirit, and the little people stood firm against their mighty neighbours. The day of misfortune came, and Judah fell before Babylon, but not for long. The persistent force of the nation, that persistency which was Jacob's, and which above all else marks the Jew, made its way to restoration, and when the captives returned to Jerusalem, all the people of their race became Jews, men of Judah; and Jerusalem, to all the scattered Jews, the sacred centre of the earth. At last, of David's line, arose a greater still. The Master of spiritual thought came of the stock of Judah and as His kingdom was symbolised in the giving to Him of the ancient name — the Lion of the tribe

of Judah, so was the meekness and love which made His kingship sure, as well as the source whence He derived it symbolised in His other name — the Lamb of God. David and Jesus — surely Judah had great men.

Therefore, looking back on this lightly touched sketch, we get interested in him who was the founder of the tribe. Was he worthy of his descendants, worthy of the fortunes of his race? What sort of man does the book of Genesis represent him to be? Is there aught in the few touches we have of him that can account for the pre-eminence of his tribe? Can we bring him before us with any vividness, can we realise the man? We can realise him, as he is given in the story. How far his character is historical, we do not know; but it is at least before us as in an epic poem. He is conceived of as a whole by the writer, and we can draw our lessons without enquiring too closely into the accuracy.

The first scene in which we meet him is marked with the fierce passions of an early time. The brothers have met for the mid-day meal at Dothan. They lift their eyes, and see Joseph drawing nigh across the fields, and hate and scorn, envy and jealousy ring in the sentence: "Behold, this dreamer cometh! Come, now, let us slay him and cast him

into a pit, and we shall see what will become of his dreams." Thus the sin of hatred cherished in thought breaks out, on opportunity given, into the sudden act of murder, and we learn that though sins of thought are not so bad as sins of act, for they can still be repented of; yet, to nurse a sin in thought is to make it easy to commit in act. Cherish hate, and we know not when we may be swept into murder. Cherish any guilt in thought, and one touch sets the repressed waters into a headlong torrent of act. Care then for your thoughts, and the acts will take care of themselves. That is the lesson.

So these men with their murdered brother sat down around the pit's mouth to eat and drink. Conscience did not make them cowards nor their daily meal impossible, for hate is almost as strong as love in making sin appear not sin. And now Judah begins to play his part. He had hated like the rest, but he kept his head. Passion touched him for a short period, but prudence had its way after passion. When the company of Ishmaelites passed by, he seized his opportunity. He foresaw the wild torment of conscience, did he and they slay their brother. "His blood would cry out of the ground in which they should conceal it." They would be accursed and feel accursed, and lose the



use and good of life. Therefore, coolly, quietly, he provided against the dreadful work of conscience in the future. "Our end will be reached as easily without shedding our brother's blood. Sell him to this caravan; we shall be rid of him and his dreams, and be quiet-hearted. What profit is it if we slay our brother and conceal his blood?" And his brethren were content.

It is a curious dramatic opposition of human character. The fierce unthinking brothers are seen set over against the man of wisdom, and we mark the power which Judah has already over them. Thus, at the very first time we touch Judah, his supremacy is clear. It is still more curious to contrast him with Reuben. Reuben's plan would not have worked well. Had Joseph been saved and brought back to his father, he would have been worse off than before. Hatred would have found its way. For their own sakes his brethren would then have got rid of him if possible. If not, and Joseph had told his tale, the favouritism of Jacob would have been greater than before, and the hate greater. Jacob might then have severed himself from his sons. He and Rachel's sons might have sent the rest into banishment. The whole family might have been broken up, and the future of Israel ruined. It may be that Judah felt this. Anyway, he acted as if he did.

He took the only course open to him. He saved his brother's life, and he saved the unity of the family. He did grievous wrong, but he had the courage of his wrong. He saw clearly the present, saw that Joseph could not return. He saw clearly the future, and he chose his path at once. A guilty, but a strong man.

At the very moment of act while the deed is but half done, while the full sin is not committed, we may retreat; but the story tells us that we cannot put things back as they were before. The worst may not be done, but if we do not murder Joseph, we must sell him for a slave. Judah retreated, but he could not retreat altogether. Nor did he succeed in saving his conscience, as we often try to do in other things, by only going half way to sin. "His blood shall not be mine," said Judah, "I will not murder." And as long as hatred lasted, I dare say that was enough to keep his conscience quiet. But, as hatred died in Joseph's absence, conscience came back, and Judah knew his guilt, and so did his brothers. How hard it bore upon them we may see by their fear and their speech when, years afterwards, misfortune fell upon them at Pharaoh's court. At once they referred their trouble to the vengeance of God. "We are verily guilty concerning our brother, in that we saw the anguish of his soul

when he besought us and we would not hear; therefore is this distress come upon us. His blood is required of us." What does that not tell, after years, of all that remorse had done!

I have made Judah save Joseph for prudential reasons, and this covers part of his action. But not the whole of it. In the light of after events in which he showed as much heart as prudence, his present deed has another aspect. One or two quick words confirm the view that he saved him out of kindness as well. His hatred was great, but, as he waited, other thoughts stole in. He thought of the young life, he remembered his father's love for the youth, he remembered he was a brother. We find behind the prudence which said, "What profit," the humanity which closed his speech with the words, "He is our brother and our flesh." There may not have been much humanity in him, but it was in his nature, and it grew, as we shall see.

What do we know of him now? He was capable with his brothers of hatred, that is, of strong passion; he was capable with them of being swept away by his passion into violent sin. But here he divides from them, and ceases to be the common man. Unlike them, he sees the position clearly, and he sees the future. His passion is subdued to foresight and wisdom. Unlike them, also, he is not

carried by passion beyond humanity. Gentleness, human love, associated memories that soften him steal in, and he feels their force. The lamb is joined to the lion, and the wisdom of the serpent to them both. This was a man to win pre-eminence, to make his mastery felt. And it is curious how we find something of the same type of character in David, his descendant. The same holding fast of wrath, the same impetuosity in his passions, the same foresight in knotty circumstances, the same clearness of view, the same humanity—the lion, the lamb, and the serpent. Character is transmitted; and David became the master of men by the same forces which put Judah at the head of his brethren.

The next time we meet Judah he is among the Canaanites, and the subject of a strange tale. He forms a close friendship with an Adullamite, and he marries a Canaanite. You see he is made in the story a man of the world. He loves his race, but he does not keep apart from other people. He knits himself, like David, into a close friendship. He is capable of that—a man whose heart was moved by men as well as by women. We see Hirah and him living together, going together to the sheep-shearing, doing business for one another. His sympathies go abroad, he learns the world and its ways beyond the circle of his family, and the wisdom of

## *THE CHARACTER OF JUDAH*

life comes to him; so that we do not wonder at his unembarrassed, quick, and intelligent action before Joseph in the Egyptian court. In the midst of this half foreign life his wife died, and his daughter-in-law, because she had no son—and Judah forgets to give her his third son according to custom—way-laid her father-in-law and obtained a child by him. Ugly as the story is, it is not so strangely apart from the moral sense of the time as it is from ours. But Judah thinks, being deceived, that Tamar is shamelessly guilty. And the hot quickness of his nature breaks out in an instant—"Bring her forth," he cries, "and let her be burnt." Then he learns the truth; instantly his anger falls; that would be natural enough. But shame might prevent a man in such circumstances from doing justice. He had been guilty in many ways, and all the world knew his guilt. But the quiet sense of the man asserted itself, not this time in prudence, but in justice. As usual, he saw things clearly. Daylight is not brighter than the light in which Judah looked at daily life; and whether himself or others were wrong or right, and where they were wrong or right, and how to get things into the clearest light, and when there, to put them as right as he could, even when he put himself wrong. What men thought was nothing to him in comparison with this. He seems

always to have had the courage to do it and to do it at once. Nor is there anything in character which is better than this for the conduct of life, nor anything which gives a man more just power over his fellows. So the moment Judah saw he was wrong, he acknowledged it. "She hath been more righteous than I," he said of Tamar, "because I gave her not to Shelah my son." As in the case of Joseph's murder the sudden outburst of hatred was felt, yet subdued to the claim of his clear foresight of results, so here the sudden outburst of wrath was felt, but subdued to the claim of clear justice. What wonder then that a man whose character was such a rare combination of strong passion and keen sense of justice should establish himself as a ruler over men. Clear-headed and clear-hearted; and always recognising the natural claims of humanity. Indeed, in both cases, his action is based, beyond common sense, on common humanity. Joseph was his brother; Tamar was a woman, and she had a right to a son.

The next time we meet Judah, the same elements of character appear in very different circumstances. The food the men had brought from Egypt was exhausted, and their father bade them go again. But Joseph had refused to see them without Benjamin, and Jacob would not part with the last of

Rachel's sons. Reuben had pledged his two children to his father for the safety of Benjamin, but Jacob did not believe in Reuben. He was weak through long grief and age, and petulant: "My son shall not go down with you; if mischief befall him by the way in which ye go, then shall ye bring down my grey hairs with sorrow to the grave. Why did ye tell the man you had a brother?" Then Judah, the spokesman for the rest, stepped forward and met Jacob's useless weakness with a clear statement of the case: "Here is the fact, take it, or leave it." He modified nothing. It is like a firm physician speaking to an hysterical patient with the knowledge that plain speaking is the best cure. "If thou wilt send our brother with us, we will go down and buy thee food, but if thou wilt not send him, we will not go, for the man solemnly protested to us, ye shall not see my face except your brother be with you." And when Jacob still hung back, he went on: "Send the lad with me and we will arise and go, that we may live and not die, we and thou and our little ones. Do you not see that all our lives are in question?" Then, with a touch of that impatience with vain objections and delay which those men have who see vividly the right thing to do, he adds: "Except we had lingered, surely we had returned this second time." The same clear head,

you see, the same plain rendering of justice to circumstances. Things being so, we *must* act in this way.

Now, such a character is often hard, and Judah had often been hard. Still, as before, the humanity in his character comes out. He feels with sorrow; and though he speaks sternly, he pities the old man's grief. Conscience of his sin to Joseph, as well as his own nature, had made him tender: "I will be surety for Benjamin, and of my hand shalt thou require him; if I bring him not unto thee, let me bear the blame for ever." It was no vain boast: as we shall see, he meant it thoroughly. And the old man felt his son's love and knew that he might trust him. Judah's strong character had made its way, and Jacob yields at once, as Judah's brethren did before, to the mastery and truth of his son: "Take your brother and go." Here, then, is a new element in Judah's character. Not only clear, intellectual perception of facts, and just action on them, but settled tenderness of heart. It was needed to make him truly great as a leader of men. Justice without tenderness is always becoming unjust, for it cannot make allowance for weakness. It treats weakness as a crime, when it should treat it as a disease. It is incapable of mercy, and the merciless may rule the bodies but not the souls of



### *THE CHARACTER OF JUDAH*

men. Earthly power doth then show likest God's when mercy seasons justice.

The next, and almost the last scene in which we meet him, is equally characteristic. Joseph's cup is put in Benjamin's sack. The sons of Israel are pursued and accused of the theft. I am sure it was Judah who answered the steward, though it is not told us. The speech has all his clearness of statement, all his sense of the necessary justice of things: "We have brought back the money we found, and more money. Honesty like that is not likely to steal silver or gold, but if the cup is found, let him who stole it die, and we become your lord's bondmen." The cup is found in Benjamin's sack, and Judah and his brethren return to Joseph's house. No man could be in a more difficult position now than Judah. The very child he had sworn to bring back is the guilty one, and Judah cannot deny Benjamin's guilt. And it was guilt against the greatest man in Egypt, in whose hand were not only their lives, but the lives of all they had left behind. Judah closed at once with the difficulty, and nothing can be more masterly, more quiet, more politic, than the way in which he did it. He confesses the guilt at once with his usual justice, and to shield Benjamin he binds himself and all his brethren together as responsible for the crime: "What shall we say unto my lord, what

shall we speak, or how shall we clear *ourselves*? God has found out the iniquity of thy servants; behold, we are my lord's servants, both we and he also with whom the cup is found." "God forbid," replied Joseph, "only he shall be my servant with whom is found my cup." Then Judah, driven into the last corner, makes that beautiful and touching speech which we all know, almost the most beautiful thing in this book of Genesis. Having allowed the guilt, he attempts no defence of it, but in his quiet and dignified way first states all the facts one by one with absolute and limpid clearness, filling them throughout—I know not how, but we feel it as we read—with a pervading tenderness, so that we hear the softness in his voice; and then pleads in extenuation the claims of humanity. He appeals to the natural tenderness in Joseph, to the natural piety of the heart towards an old man's life of sorrow, towards fatherhood longing to see the only son left of a loved and lost and unforgotten wife. "He is a lad, and his father's life is bound up with his life." Then, having restrained himself up to this point that he might state all things with lucid force, his tenderness and love break forth. The last touch comes: "I am surety for the boy. Take me instead of him. I pray thee let thy servant abide instead of the lad, a bondman to my lord; and let the lad

go up with his brethren. For how shall I go up to my father and the lad be not with me, lest peradventure I see the evil that shall come upon my father?" Who does not feel the burst of passionate tenderness in that? The whole deeper nature of the man breaks out in it.

And it is at that moment when, in intense realisation of his father's sorrow, and in sympathy with it, he loved Jacob and Benjamin enough to say: "I give myself to bondage or death, if only they may be happy," that not only his sin against Joseph was blotted out from his conscience—he could not have felt its burden again—but also, that he reached nobleness—one whom even Joseph, his brother, should praise. We who have seen him prudent, stern, clear-headed, wise in the handling of the world might not unfairly think him incapable of the greater passions, of losing himself utterly for another, of throwing all away for love. Yet so it was. He was the first of all these men, the wisest, the strongest, the most capable, the most trusted; master of a full, successful, and wealthy life, in the prime of his manhood, and with all his plans and thoughts in working order in his brain. And he threw them all at the feet of love, not the love of woman, for which men have often done this deed, but for love of a boy and an old man who were

wrapt up in each other, for the natural piety of a son and a brother. The same passionate nature which we have seen break forth in hatred, in anger, in indignant justice, in a half scorn of weakness, now broke out in a rush of self-sacrifice. There the true king of men appeared. He needed but that to fulfil his nature. The lion of Judah became at one with the spirit of the Lamb of God. Judah's character reached its finished height — clear intellect, strong justice, intense love — brain, conscience, and heart wrought together into a whole. Truly said Jacob, "Thou art he whom thy brethren shall praise."

Lastly, we get one more hint of his life. It is a pleasant one for the imagination, and it brings the end of this discourse into connection with the beginning, for both touch the interests of history. We are told that Jacob going down to Egypt sent Judah before him to meet Joseph. Benjamin is kept by the father's side, but the wise and just and tender man is sent to greet the great prince, the great genius, and the well beloved son. It was Jacob's forgiveness of the wrong of Judah. It was the expression of Jacob's gratitude to Judah and his trust in him. And when Joseph met Judah, he must have loved him. For if Judah had sold Joseph, he had offered his life for Benjamin. Of all the

brothers he was the only one with whom Joseph could now be a close friend. Both were kingly men, each had won eminence over others, each knew the world, and both had proved their heart. They met and stood together, and around them the chariots and troops of Joseph; and the sight is worthy of the eye of history. For there on the threshold of the land where their race was to grow into a great multitude, met in thought the two great Kingdoms of Israel and Judah. Ephraim, the leader and royal tribe of Israel, came of Joseph. In Judah lay all the great time of David and Solomon, and the later history of the Jews. It was a royal meeting. Men looked at both and wondered. The Egyptians stood round Joseph, and all thought him the greatest, and it was so then. Judah stood alone, but around him stand in the view of history all the greatest men of the Jewish race, all its greatest work and thought — David, Solomon, Isaiah, Nehemiah, Jesus — and great as Joseph was then, Judah was yet greater.



FREEDOM FROM EGYPT





# I

## FREEDOM FROM EGYPT

*"Let my people go that they may serve me."*

EXODUS ix. 1.

THE tribe of the "Sons of Israel" lived, after their patriarchal life in Canaan, in Egypt; there they multiplied and, with other dependent tribes and the peasants of Egypt, were greatly oppressed by the ruling classes, and chiefly in the huge building and canal operations which were carried out by Rameses II. and his successor; they revolted and fled over the isthmus of Suez into the peninsula of Sinai, where they wandered until they broke upon the Canaanitish tribes, and finally grew into a nation. Their leader was Moses, who is as real as the Exodus itself. So much, at least, is history. But legend soon gathered round the events of the Exodus and the figure of Moses. Poet after poet, patriot after patriot, story-teller after story-teller, took up the old tale, until, more than four centuries after the Exodus — at least so critics have come to believe — the various legends of Moses

and his chief men were thrown into a single story, which afterwards underwent still further changes, additions, and priestly and prophetic editings. At last it was secured in the form in which we possess it in the Bible. We have not, then, in this story, a true history of Moses and the Exodus, but we have a poetic story with all the powers and humanity of poetry, and moreover a veritable picture of what the best men of Israel, in the hour of their imagination, thought and believed four and five centuries after the Exodus. And this picture is deliberately religious in aim. It tells us then not only what the Israelites thought at that date about human affairs, but about divine affairs, and this has the greatest possible interest for us. Furthermore, it is a tale even more national than that of Genesis. It begins with the birth of Moses; its action begins with the mission God gives to the deliverer in the bush land of Sinai; it ends with the death of Moses. But the most passionate moment of it is the deliverance, the Exodus, which gives its name to the book. That has become the image of a thousand similar deliverances, of the resurrection from slavery and from death in life, of peoples, of societies, of classes, of the personal soul. As such, it has been chosen as the type of the resurrection of Christ, of Easter Day, and on this Easter Day we choose one moment in

its story for our subject — the bold demand that Moses made upon Pharaoh in the name of Jehovah: “Let my people go that they may serve me.”

There is no need to tell the story itself, but there is always need to ask, What are its lessons for our modern life—that is, what are the human elements in the story, and what their analogies to-day in State and Church? Well, first, we have a picture of a huge and complicated Egyptian society: a great king, great nobles, a powerful priesthood mixed up with the State, a body of rich and comfortable citizens and tradesmen; and below a multitude of peasants and slaves and poor folk who were used by the upper classes to do their work and to minister to their luxury, who were always in complaint, sometimes in revolt, who were fearfully punished if they revolted, and driven to harder labour if they complained. “They are idle, they are idle,” was then the cry, “unthrifty dogs! Double their burdens, keep them down. Give them no straw for their bricks; let them find it for themselves, and exact the same tale of bricks from them.” This was the fate of the working peasant of Egypt, and it has been their fate from generation to generation. But the matter became complicated somewhat when the same fate was imposed on a free tribe of strangers, whom the King of Egypt chose to degrade to the

status of slaves because it was said that they had multiplied too much for the safety of society. These folk had traditions of liberty. Their patriarchs had lived in freedom. They had, in Egypt, lived on the borders of the desert, and till lately had been free tributary tribes. Their enslavement had only lasted a few generations. Even in that short time it had partly degraded the mass of the people. But it had not taken the passion of freedom out of the heart of the better men; and when these came forward as leaders, the mass of the people had the energy, which the Egyptian peasant had not, to follow their leaders into the freedom of the wilderness.

This was some thousands of years ago, and yet, save for the mere name of slave, it has a very modern sound. We have got rid of the lash and the mines, and the power of life and death over the slave and the worker; but the thing itself is never far away from us. There has been a certain minishment of it within the last hundred years; but towards the end of the last century things on the Continent and even in England, were, practically speaking, as bad if not worse than they were in Egypt. Society — the institution of slavery excepted — was then built on the same lines as it was in Egypt; and even to this day the lines on which our society is built are

much the same. They are slowly changing, and changing for the better; but if we compare our modern world with the conception of the kingdom and of the society which Christ desired, the difference between the society of the Pharaohs and of London to-day is, face to face with that comparison, small indeed.

What, however, does this book say concerning this matter? What did the Jews who wrote this Exodus-tale think about it? The mass of our respectable society takes this book as its guide. These Exodus chapters are read in every church in England at this time of the year. Have they ever been applied by society to its own conditions? Has our government ever thought what they mean? The conception of their writers is this: That when any society such as this exists, which uses up the labour of the peasant and the mechanic for its luxury and to increase its wealth; and drives them to overwhelming labour, whether as of old, by the lash, or as now for the support of social conditions which virtually impose starvation on those who rebel or complain — God Himself is at war with it, and is at the head of the revolt against it; it is He who sends the leaders to protest against its oppression; it is He who plagues the society with woes and dangers: it is He who, with a mighty hand and a

stretched-out arm, delivers the people whose affliction He has seen, and who cries in the ears of those who make their power and their wealth out of the overwhelming labour of the poor, "Let my people go, that they may serve me."

Let modern society look to it, not only here in England — where men, I honestly believe, are thinking and caring more than elsewhere for this matter, but not as yet enough — but all over the civilised world, in France, in Germany, and Austria, in Italy, and above all, in America; for unless they do, unless they listen to the cry, "Let my people go that they may serve me," plagues will fall upon them, and they shall know that a resurrection of the downtrodden often means a destruction of the Egyptians. This is the teaching of this book. This is the lesson to States which the freedom-loving spirit of the Israelite has handed down to posterity, and bound up with the name of Jehovah. It sins by its violent and unloving spirit. A different way of doing the same thing belongs to the teaching of Jesus. But though the way is different, the thing remains. Wherever there is oppression, wherever the conditions are the same or similar to those in Egypt, wherever labour is unjustly weighted, and unshared by all, wherever the poor are overdone, God sees their affliction in the end, and

comes down to deliver. When the tale of bricks is doubled, Moses comes; and it will depend entirely on the spirit of the more comfortable classes in society, on their conscience of the wrongs of their social system and on their efforts to cure them, whether they are saved so as by fire, or altogether swept away. The punishment, which is the strict and just reaping of exactly that which has been sown, is in proportion to the crime, the precise result of the precedent conditions. There is no menace in the story; there is no menace in the statement that I make; it is a story that proclaims the moral law which rules the evolution of societies; it is a statement of that which is certain to be. The sanctions of the law of justice for nations take a long time to reach their full effect; but they are as sure as death. Where *those* conditions are, *this* will follow. If the conditions are fully iniquitous, the society which permits them is blotted out; if they are not fully iniquitous, but tempered with just effort for remedy, that society is gently treated—warned, not overthrown. But the warning must be listened to, and its cry obeyed, else a louder thunder rolls.

We are beginning to understand this inevitableness of the moral law for nations, as well as for persons, in England; but we shall have to under-

stand it far better than we do. There is as yet no widespread or full conviction over the whole of society of the certainty of this law. If there were, citizens would live differently, feel differently, and never rest till every class in our society, every person in it, had equal opportunities to be in as good health both of mind and body as an athlete is in every member of his body. Only then is a State moral, only then is a State religious. It were well if over the doors of the Home Office, over the doors of every municipal council, over the doors of every parish council and every vestry, there were written these ancient words: "Let my people go that they may serve me." And when all this work of man is done; this work of God, for no more religious work can be done on earth, England will, as a State, know the meaning of Easter Day.

Secondly, the same things are true in the realm of religious history. When Jesus, like Moses, came into Palestine, He found the souls and minds of men as heavily burdened, as deeply enslaved, as the bodies of the Israelites in Egypt. The whole of the ceremonial law bore as bitterly on the religious lives of men as the building tasks did on the slaves of Pharaoh. "Ye bind on men's shoulders," said Jesus, "burdens grievous to be borne." A multitude of doctrines concerning God which



limited the love of God, and of ceremonies which concerned the salvation of men, made religion difficult for most, impossible for the publican and the outcast, and enslaved the intellect, the conscience, the reason, and the imagination of the Jews. Most of them had to make bricks without straw. It is not that the Pharisees and Scribes and the priests were worse at this time than other ecclesiastics and their crew have been at other times in history. It is not that the spirit which slaughtered Christ in Jerusalem has been confined to the priesthood of Israel. In the Church of Christ itself, from generation to generation, and at the present day, the iniquitous insistence on rites and ceremonies as necessary to salvation; the doctrines which exclude men and women on any pretext whatever from salvation; the condemnation in the name of God of the innocent, of those who think for themselves, of the unbelievers in fixed creeds; the pictures of a God of vengeance and injustice; the dreadful schemes of salvation which insult love in God, and paint human nature in the dyes of hell — have been worse far than any with which Jesus came into contact, and had He appeared among those who taught these views He would have been burned alive. Were He to appear now, and preach His faith among us, He would not be slain, but He would

be despised and rejected of religious society. No; the spirit of the Jewish priesthood was no worse than the spirit of priesthood, whether in Church or Dissent, has ever been. That spirit has always oppressed the souls of men. It has more or less, in proportion to its love of power, enslaved their conscience and their reason, and crushed the freedom of the life of the spirit. Good men have been many among these priests; there have been many who have truly lived and loved like Jesus; but their organisations—with their love of authority in Sect and Church alike; and their creeds, when they claim to be believed on peril of damnation; and their ceremonies, which are made to limit freedom of form; and their tradition of divine authority; and their supernatural claims which divide them from other men and give them a false and base power—these have made them the Pharaohs of the soul of man. And the Almighty Love who rules the world has seen again and again the affliction of His children, and has come down to deliver them. Moses has come many times in the history of religion. Prophet after prophet has cried in the name of God: "Let my people go;" and delivered the soul of man. There has been exodus after exodus from this Egypt — overthrow after overthrow of the power of these Pharaohs.

Among all these deliverers none has been so great a deliverer as Jesus Christ. He spoke to the priests as Moses spoke to Pharaoh. He broke their ecclesiastical law. He dissolved the necessity of their ceremonies. He brought the Gospel to the hearts of those whom they scorned and oppressed. Their enemies were His friends, their doctrines about God were His horror. Where they excluded, He accepted. Their whole organisation, and the power it exercised over the soul, He stood against, because it was against love, and they killed Him for it. But what He taught did not die. There is nothing needed for salvation but the love of God and man. When that is in the heart of men, they have no need of creeds or ceremonies or priests. There is no authority but that of love, and whoever loves is his own authority, for he dwells in God and God in him. God is the Father of men, and all are equally His children. Let the child love his divine Father, let the brother love the brother, and they are independent of creeds, and opinions, and ceremonies, and Churches, and sects. That was the final conclusion of His teaching, and He brought it home to the religious oppressors of His day. He stood in pity by all crushed and weary souls, and cried to their tyrants: "Let my people go that they may serve the

Father;" and with a mighty hand and a stretched-out arm the spirit of man went forth into a free life. It was the resurrection of the soul of humanity — for the time. Yes, only for a time, for the great Pharaohs of formalism, of creed-imposing, and of earthly power masking in a religious dress, closed in again on the world, like greedy wolves. But that great resurrection which Christ had wrought held in it the power of others, and each that has followed has been more free and active against the spiritual Egyptians, and will be more active and more free, until the dawn of that final Easter Day, when the soul of man shall stand face to face with the Father alone, risen into an endless love.

That day may not be so far away as we imagine, but yet it must sometimes seem to us as if we were still in Egypt, as if no deliverer from spiritual bondage had ever come to lead us out of captivity. When I think of all the poor and oppressed souls working out with pain and trouble their inner lives under the tyranny of their religion — I might say under the tyranny of their religious teachers, were it not that the teachers suffer often as terribly as the taught — crushed to the very ground of their heart by the terrible image of their God, and of all He requires of them; told that unless they believe

with their whole soul a string of doctrines framed by the intellect alone in its austere hour of scholastic logic, they will be lost; that unless they confess the necessity to salvation of certain rites and ceremonies they can have no communion with God at all; terrified, even the best and gentlest of them, by the thought that God is watching for their fall and ready to pounce upon them; miserable with the idea that there is no certainty, that their final happiness with God is little better than a chance—for how do they know that their belief is quite right?—sometimes lost in questioning, sometimes distracted with doubt, sometimes despairing; and the better they are, the more delicate in conscience, and the more spiritual in imagination, the more tormented; small freedom in love, little peace in life, troubled even in death; when I think of all this, the misery of the good makes me tremble with indignation against the theologies that have forgotten the deliverance of Jesus. I would to God that thousands would speak with the power of Moses and the mightier voice of Jesus to the Churches and sects which keep up these slaveries, and who do not believe that God is always victorious love: “Thus saith the Lord, Let my people go that they may love me.”



## II

### FREEDOM FROM EGYPT

*"Let my people go that they may serve me."*

EXODUS ix. 1.

THE cry of God, on the lips of Moses, to the Pharaoh of Egypt — "Let my people go that they may serve me" — may be repeated to-day, as I have shown, to the Pharaohs of our society by whom men and women are kept in a state of virtual slavery, and to the Pharaohs of Church and Dissent who keep in a like slavery the conscience, the reason, and the spirit of man. There is yet another analogy on which I must speak — an analogy drawn from the spiritual life within us all, and to which this cry of Moses has an incessant application. But before I speak of that, it is better to put clearly how it happens that this story can be used, in this symbolic fashion, to represent so many human things. If it were a true history, if it were an accurate statement of facts, it would not be possible to make it apply so widely. Too many special-

ised elements would then enter into it, and spoil its universal application. But conducted by the imagination, which, as I have said, seizes the universal and neglects the particular, it speaks to common human nature. The human soul, working slowly through centuries, shaped it, and it naturally represents humanity. It is not a true history of the Hebrews, but it is a true history of a great part of human life. Therein lies its power and its inspiration. And there is that which enables us to apply it to our own day, to our political, social, religious, and spiritual life. It may be used as symbol, it may be used as allegory. And the proof that it may be used in this way is that it has always been so used. Just as the great epics and the great myths have been used, so has this story. It has been applied to a thousand conditions of society in the long centuries which have passed since it was written. It has represented the whole progress of religious life, at all times, in Jewish and Christian hearts. There is scarcely a single event in the Wandering of Israel which has not been made to symbolise a stage in the spiritual wandering of the soul from the slavery of sin to the entrance into the heavenly Canaan. Egypt, the Red Sea, Sinai, Jordan, Canaan, have all become names for spiritual conditions of the soul; and the great deliverance



which Moses initiated in the words of the text represents to us now the deliverance of humanity by Jesus, and the personal deliverance of each man from the bondage of sin into the glorious liberty of the children of God. This has been the constant symbolic use of this story. Its historical truth has been entirely replaced by its symbolic truth. Therefore, we have a perfect right to use it to illustrate certain states of slavery in which the soul is involved, and our deliverance therefrom.

The soul is a commonwealth, or may practically be thought of as a commonwealth. It has its great rulers: the will, the conscience, the reasoning faculty, imagination, the power of worship, the love of beauty, the love of love. It has its great burghers: the senses, the appetites, the passions, the traditional thoughts and emotions which have come down to it through the centuries; and below these, there are a multitude of labourers — hosts of small desires and motives and fancies and transient feelings, and impressions from without, who supply the great rulers and the great citizens of the kingdom with their food, their luxuries, their amusements, their work, and their pleasures. Enormous as this London of ours is, varied and passionate as we know its life to be, it often seems to us that the realm within each person is greater, and the

indwellers of the soul more varied and more multitudinous. This is each man's microcosm, as it used to be called, his little cosmic realm, where all that is in the greater cosmos is reflected or represented.

The soul may be a just commonwealth, in which every indweller has his fitting weight and work, in which all the powers of man, in perfect health and in mutual and due subordination, and yet in full individuality, work together towards the noble end and perfection of the whole being, for the sake of the vaster life of all the spiritual beings of the universe. For we are all knit together, being all in God, and the life of every soul influences in varied and unknown ways the life of all the personalities of a boundless universe. But the soul may cease to be a just commonwealth, and become a tyranny. It may be like Egypt, enslaved under one power, one passion, one appetite, or one desire. Then all the other powers and faculties are used up for the sake of the one tyrant, and the soul suffers degradation. For these Pharaohs of the soul their slaves build treasure cities where the oppressors stow away their indulgences and their pleasures, base things in which they take a base delight. They force into servile doing of their will all the powers of the imagination, the reason and the heart, so that these

powers must do no good thing, or seek for good no more. Under their rule, all the work the soul performs is vile, shameful and coerced; and when the soul has no more means to do it, when the imagination is exhausted, and the reason dry, and the affections cold, it is still forced on by the tyrant lust or the tyrant passion to do the same monotonous work, do it while it sickens the soul to do it, making its bricks without straw, lashed on by drunkenness or gluttony, by lust or pleasure, by hatred, ambition, pride, or self-will, by any overmastering passion — dreadful taskmasters! It is Egyptian bondage, a state of shame and degradation. O, well we know this tyranny! And bitterly we cry, and long in vain against it, until at last the Christ within us rises up, and, standing face to face with the Pharaoh of self-will, of appetite, or of evil passion, cries against it in prophetic wrath, "Let my people — let the other powers of the soul whom thou hast enslaved to thy accursed greed, let all its inhabitants go free, that they may serve the Lord and serve mankind."

This is a plain analogy, but there are others, not quite so plain, and which have to do with matters that do not belong to vice or to evil passion. The powers of the soul may be enslaved to one power, which, good in itself, becomes a source of evil and

of wrong to mankind, when it seizes on all the others and uses them only for its own purposes. A good man, when he is entrusted with sole power over a nation, over a class, over a host of workmen, over an estate, is inevitably tempted by the lust of power. He slowly becomes a tyrant determined to subdue all wills to his own; and he ends by oppressing all those who resist him. And the better his nature is originally, the greater is often the slavery he establishes.

It is the same with the great and good powers of the soul, when any one of them dominates over the rest. When, for example, the moral sense so seizes on a man that he sees no other master in his soul, no other law but the moral law, the moral sense becomes Pharisaism. It finally dwells only on outward accordance with morality, and then the infinite outgoings of aspiration and the winged imaginations of the spirit are imprisoned and condemned to slavish labour; then love and forgiveness and mercy are sacrificed to tyrannic demands for external obedience; then the reason, when it complains, is bid to hold its tongue; and at last conscience itself — which always, when it is natural, falls back on love as its guide — is trodden under foot by the moral sense now changed into a tyrant, ruined by despotism. That is, conscience, when it keeps all the powers

of the soul in slavery, enslaves also its true self.

Then love and imagination and reason, rising together in indignation, like Moses and Aaron, ought to meet the Pharaoh of loveless morality, as pitiless as it is intolerant, and cry against it this ancient cry, "Let the people of the soul go free, that they may love again, and imagine again, and live once more in the spirit, and not in the letter of the law."

Again, the same things are true when the mere reasoning faculty seizes on the tyranny of the soul. All the powers of faith and the hopes of faith are then repressed. What we call the spiritual faculty, that which believes in an unreached perfection of love and purity and embodies it in God, and feels Him as its source and head; that which worships; that which lives beyond this world and sees another — this is suppressed, and if allowed to breathe at all, is forced to do the work of the understanding. And not only these spiritual powers, but others also suffer. The love of beauty, the power of seeing it, remain wholly uneducated. They are kept to slavish work, if they are allowed to work at all. All that vast population of motives and impressions from what is lovely in Nature and in Art is driven into a corner of the soul and condemned to silence and

imprisonment. And the imagination is not allowed to have a word. It confuses the work and the government of the understanding. And fancy, bright and joyous child, is chained and silenced, so that at last the man comes to say: "Once I could love beauty, now I do not know it when I meet it; once I could love the work of art — music, poetry, painting, sculpture — once I could rejoice as I lay idle on the breast of Nature and listened to her voice; now all these things disgust me."

This is the Pharaoh of the understanding, and an abominable tyrant he is. A good and useful fellow when he is one among the other lords of the soul and does his work along with the rest; but set up as sole monarch, he is a destroyer and enslaver. It is time for many of us — for this is an Egyptian condition frequent in the present day in the souls of men, even more in the souls of women — to call in our affliction if we would be free men, on the spiritual powers in us, on the imagination, on the love of beauty, and on the spirit, to stand before this Pharaoh, and to cry: "Let the powers you have enslaved go free, that they may serve God and man."

Precisely the same things may be said with regard to the tyranny which, in reaction from the tyranny of the understanding, has become so common among cultivated folk in our own day — the tyranny of the

love of beauty for itself alone. That, raised into absolute monarchy, enslaves the reasoning faculty, mocks at and degrades its suggestions; imprisons morality and bids it hold its tongue lest it interfere for the search for pleasure in all things. It allows some liberty to the spiritual faculty, not indeed to find the infinite goodness and love, but to add a supernatural flavour to beauty on this earth; not to impel us to a greater love of man, but to deepen love of one's own pleasure. It permits the imagination to work, but only to increase the materials of sensual beauty. Thus it corrupts the soul; and itself, though one of the noblest of our powers, becomes, when it tyrannises, the most ignoble perhaps of all. Having begun with the love of the heavenly, it ends in the love of sensual beauty. Then, if we are to be saved, the indignant powers of conscience, reason, love of man, and love of God's purity, rise like Moses and Aaron in the soul and cry to this Egyptian: "Let us go and sacrifice to the Lord our God." The wildest wilderness is better than these flesh-pots of Egypt.

Once more; things are just as evil when the spiritual faculty assumes the tyranny. When it is allowed to enslave the understanding, to trample on the love of beauty or the love of love, to twist and torture the conscience, to reject the service of man

for the service of God, it is one of the most hateful of all the oppressors of the soul. It binds us down into thinking of our own salvation alone, instead of living to bring salvation to others, instead of believing that to redeem men is better than to be contemplating our own redemption. It drives men into that asceticism which makes the body unhealthy and then the intellect, and which, by despising human love and natural affection, dries up the very fountain of human life, and divides man from man. It replaces service of one another in this world by a useless contemplation of the other world. It prevents us from trying to make a heaven on earth for our fellow men, by fixing our eyes on a heaven beyond this earth for ourselves. It wraps us up in self by pretending that it wraps us up in God. It leads us to persecute those who do not agree with us, and it exercises what it calls charity only on those who think about God in the same way as we do. At every point it kills love, which is the only root of the true spiritual life, and in that way it destroys — when it is thus tyrannical — its own spirituality. Under its oppression, human affection and human intelligence, and love of natural beauty, and of pure pleasure, and universal love of human nature, and civic and social morality, and the conscience of what is due to others, and, further,



the work of conscience in our own lives, are all enslaved and degraded. And the conclusion is that the faculty itself is enslaved, and what sits on the throne is not it, but its false image.

Of all the Pharaohs who beset us, it is the most difficult to overcome, for it makes the greatest pretensions to goodness, and to rightfulness of dominion. But, in a true man, who seeks for the true perfection and finish of every part of his nature in God, the population of the soul will revolt against this oppression; the reason and the conscience, the affections and the imagination will lead them, like Moses and Aaron; the very senses and appetites in their just subordination will join in the rebellion; and the spiritual faculty, now turned into a priestly tyrant, will hear, as it has heard many times in history, and a million million times in the souls of men, the wrathful cry of the other powers of the soul. "Let us go free to reach our individual excellence in liberty, that we may, one and all, serve mankind, and in serving mankind serve the Lord our God. But thou, who wert once so good, come down and live justly among us, having thine own fit importance, and no more."

These are analogies every man will feel to be true in his own life or in the lives of others: and the conclusion to be drawn from them is plain. No power

of the body, no sense, no appetite, not one of the powers of the soul is to be master. Only God is the Master of all, and God is Love. Every power of the body and the soul is to be equally developed in freedom to its own perfection, and in its own due proportion. Some powers are greater than others, but their greatness is to be shown, not in an exclusive lordship over the rest, but in the greatness of their service to the rest. The whole man, to the remotest recesses of every faculty of his nature, is to be wrought into completion in the service of God and man. Harmony, not tyranny, harmony in its highest sense, such as the Greek conceived it in the gods, is what God desires in the soul He made to be at one with Him for ever.

# THE DEATH OF MOSES



## THE DEATH OF MOSES

*"So Moses the servant of the Lord died."*

DEUT. xxxiv. 5.

WHEN this account in the book of Deuteronomy, and that in the book of Numbers, of the death of Moses, were both written, the person and the life of Moses were but faintly seen through the mists of centuries. Nearly seven hundred years had rolled away since the death of the great leader. It is a story, not history, which we read when we read of the dying hours of Moses. One thing alone we know — that he did die before the children of Israel marched into the promised land. It was Joshua, not Moses, who led them to conquest.

It seemed strange to those who collected all they could about his memory, and it seems strange to us, that he who had done so much of the work should neither finish the work he had begun, nor eat the fruit of the trees that he had planted. It is a constantly recurring mystery, a constant question on our lips. For, in our own experience, many die

the moment before fruition. "One soweth, another reapeth," seems almost a law. It is hard, we think; yet we suspect it is right. The plougher, the sower, is not likely to be a good reaper. Each has his place. Let him keep within it. Let the Master judge. Moreover, the sheaves we like best to reap and carry are not to be reaped and carried here; that is rarely in the order of things.

This question came forcibly before the writers of the Pentateuch, and they strove to answer it according to the ideas of their time. The writer of the book of Deuteronomy said that Moses died at the hands of God because the people of Israel had sinned against Him. The leader, it was then thought, was one with the people, and the sin of the people was laid on the leader, if he loved them enough to take its punishment. But since the leader, in this case, had not really sinned, then if he died for the sin of the people, their sin, being imputed to him, was forgiven. It was, then, natural that Moses should be punished in order to save his people from punishment; and Moses, upborne by this thought of sacrifice, did not think it unjust that he should die.

This is the thought at the root of the theory of vicarious atonement. We reject it as making God unjust, as a legal quibble imputed to the Highest,

## *THE DEATH OF MOSES*

as a barbaric idea; and it did not, as time went on, satisfy even the Jews themselves. Hence, another answer to the question, why Moses died, was invented about the very date when the book of Deuteronomy was written. God is too just it was thought (and the view appears strongly put by the Prophet Ezekiel), to punish any man for another's sin. Every punishment is the direct consequence of some sin which the punished person has himself committed. Moses, then, sinned, and therefore he died; and the story of his faithlessness at the Waters of Strife was put forward by the writer of the book of Numbers as the reason of his not entering into the promised land. That is a reason which we also reject. We know that many suffer the results of sins they have not committed. We believe that earthly misfortune is no proof of God's anger, but often of His approval. The ministry of Jesus was chiefly sorrow and pain, but the smile of the Father always rested upon it. Both the answers of the Pentateuch are, then, untrue.

The one true answer is, that the time of Moses had come, and that death, when he died, was the greatest good that could have happened to him; and, moreover, that in the spiritual world, where God and man meet, Moses, and all who, like him, die in faith after a life of faithful work, have, in

the hour of death, not the sense of punishment, but the sense of divine communion, of divine blessing, of pain passing into overwhelming joy. I think that the writer of Deuteronomy himself felt this; that, in spite of his theory, it penetrated all he wrote. All his description of the death suggests the presence, the friendship, the care and love of God for his dying servant. Let us then take the story in this light, look into it, and see what we can gain from it.

First, then, the time of Moses had come. We have no right to be fatalists. Our business here is to keep clear of death, to fight for life, as long as we can keep death at bay without dishonour. But when a man dies, it is in the harmony of nature that he dies. It is a part of order. He dies from sufficient cause, and the cause is in the natural course of things. It could not have been otherwise, under the circumstances. Of course, there are those who deliberately choose death for the sake of a great truth. These are the witnesses of truth in the world, but they are apart from this argument.

But that all ordinary deaths are in the natural order of the universe, is a truth which it is well to keep in mind, because it frees grief from a thought which is one of the greatest weights of sorrow. It



frees it from the thought that God has either arbitrarily caused the death, or arbitrarily refrained from saving the sick from death when He could have done it. "Why did God let my beloved die?" "What had he done that God should cause him to die?" are questions which are asked incessantly. They are questions which suppose God to be always working miracles; which suppose that His will is capricious; which assume that He is apart from the order of nature, and continually interfering with it. God could not have saved your beloved from death unless He had worked a miracle, and that He does not do. It is not an arbitrary act of His by which death has taken place. The death happened, and it could not have happened otherwise. The time had come.

There was no special selection of the hour when Moses should die, as the Biblical writer thinks. Death came when it had to come, and with a clear cause attached to it. Every death in the world, which is not self-chosen, occurs in that way. None are arbitrary, none are outside order, none in the world of miracle; none are ever capable of being avoided by any means outside of the course of nature. There is no special action of God, either in causing or in saving from death.

Therefore we have no right to say that God is

unkind when those whom we love die, and no right to ask Him to violate the course of nature in order to save our beloved, and then to blame Him, as if He refused our prayer. God, as a personal friend of ours, has nothing to do with our outward life or death. Our relation to Him is a spiritual relation. Our religion, our spiritual life with Him, is in another world than that of outward phenomena. Our comfort with Him, when we are separated by death from our friends, is in the belief that all whom we love, dead or alive on earth, are spiritually with Him, and that He is with them and us, in a living spiritual communion, which life and death here have nothing at all to do with.

The time of Moses had come. But he was none the less with God. And when he felt the time draw near, the legend says — and it may well be true — that he went to the top of a high mountain whence he could see the land of Israel's heritage. Many have wished — it is especially a prophet's wish — to be alone in death, alone in the silence of nature, high up, nearer the stars, where one may be able, in the absence of the noise of earth, to realise the nearness of the invisible Spirit.

So he was carried to the top of Pisgah, and left; in solitude on that peak of Pisgah which is called Nebo; and from thence he saw the country prom-

ised to his fathers. It is a mighty landscape, and there was scarcely a point in it which did not afterwards become a memory in the history of the Jewish people, scarcely a name which has not some significance in the spiritual history of mankind. There, to the north, lay Gilead and the mountain plateau divided by the ford of Jabbok, rocky plains, hill pastures, forests of oak and pine; and beyond, Gennesaret and Merom, all the wild land on either side of Jordan, crowned by the eternal snows of Hermon; and Lebanon spread its cedars far away; and towards the Great Sea, he saw the cornfields of Esdraelon, the mount of Carmel, Gilboa, and the broken highlands where Ephraim was soon to couch like a lion in his den. Nearer at hand, more to the west, was the plain of Judah, and nearer still the dry limestone rocks of Judah, where, years afterwards, Israel's Jerusalem uprose, even more than Rome the centre of the imagination of the world. And below, right at his feet, lay the Dead Sea, in its crater-cup of hills, and Jericho in its pastures, and the mountain pass that led to the hill that men afterwards called Zion.

This was the scene that met his dying eyes. Alone he looked on it, and thought, "This is the promised land. Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob saw it before me. They were but pilgrims in it. I have

worked for it; I have come to the edge of it; I may not enter into it."

And as he lay there in the deep silence, his first thought was, no doubt, regret. "Why, having done all I could have done, may I not see the end? Would that I could go with my people and share their glory and their conquest! Does God do right to take me away now? I have borne the burden and heat of the day; why should I not taste of the grapes of Eshcol?"

A natural first thought! But it would not last long with one who had the long experience of Moses. He would soon feel that his work was done; that what he had specially to accomplish had been accomplished; that to die now was to die exactly at the right moment, at the very crowning point of glory and completion; that the work of the future would be better done by other hands than his; that the great warrior, Joshua, would be more fit to finish that which the great law-giver had begun. Israel had been wrought by him into one ordered and compact body. It was Joshua's work to launch that body on the foe.

"I shall not see," he may well have said to himself, "the end with my mortal eyes, but I see it now with the eyes of faith and imagination. All that land will be the land of my people. I see

them resting in its possession, and I see it without the fierce trouble of the wars which they will have to wage, of the strife of policy which they will have to guide — things for which I am not now fit, which my age could not endure. The vision God gives to me now is better than the reality would be. Better to die in its beauty here, in full faith in it, than to perish by slow disease, unable to fight, unable to rule, in my tent, in the rear of the army. Who shall say that I do not enter into the promised land? I have entered. I am in it, as it will be when Joshua comes to die, when peace has fallen on the conquest, and men sit at ease under the olives. God is right to let me die. I taste, as I should never taste them did I enter in with the host, of the grapes of Eshcol. The burden and heat of the past are well rewarded. My work is, in God, well done. I look below on the tents of my people. They are free, ordered, and knit together, healed from all taint of the old slavish life, hardy, brave, and loving one another. They are sure of victory. It is my work, it is finished. I thank God that His presence with me gave me power to do it. Come, Jehovah, Lord of heaven and earth, receive my joyful spirit!"

Death was a good to him, and not an evil. Can we not see that? Why, it was the exact hour in

which he ought to have died. Had he lived, he had been unhappy. Had he lived, the remembrance his people would have had of him would have been of one who was past his work, whom Joshua had replaced, who had died in weakness of brain, bereft of force. Now, the memory was indeed different. He died in the fulness of his glory, with all his work perfected. Men sorrowed for him, but the sorrow was soon lost in the thought of his glory, of all he had left to man, of all he had done for man. Not one unhappy, not one strained thought, marred the historic memory of Moses. Men said that his eye was not dim, nor his natural force abated, when he passed away.

It is the way we should look upon our dead, even when we sorrow most for them. It is the way we should ourselves look back when we come to die. There is always at first natural regret that we cannot go on, or that our loved ones cannot enter into the end of their labours. But then, when we think we often know, at least when the work done has been noble, that death is the best. To go on till we are worn out, to begin a new labour for which we are unfitted by the past and by age, is nothing to be desired. To die when our memory will be unspoilt is better; to die when none can say: "He did not do that with the same power;" to die when

## *THE DEATH OF MOSES*

what we were fitted to do has been well done—that is to be desired, not to be regretted. It was the happy fate of Moses, it is the happy fate of thousands who we foolishly wish had lived longer, of whom had they longer lived, we should not have such beautiful and inspiring memories, who themselves, had they lived longer, might have, in disappointment and in weakness, passionately desired to die.

There is another cry which may be answered within the same realm of thought. It is the cry of "waste." When men die in the fulness of their powers, as Moses died, we think that there is a waste of power. So there might be, if the power of those who die were really extinguished. But that is not our belief. Our belief is that it is expanded, ennobled, set at once to work, that it can do its work better, that its energies are more developed, that the range and objects of its work are ten-fold greater and more numerous than they are on earth. Waste! when God and His work are everywhere. Waste! when the whole universe of humanity in the other world is open to him whom we have lost on earth. Waste of power! It is a thought impossible to the Christian man, as he looks upon his dead.

Moreover, even without the belief in immortal-

ity, it is not fitting for a man to gaze upon his dead and say that there is waste of a noble life because it is cut short by death. A man who has worked well, who has loved, who has won love by loving, who has been brave and true, lives on in power, lives in all those who remember him, and brings forth fruit in them. Lost as earthly friends, the dead are gained as spiritual indwellers, and they even move us forward more powerfully to noble ends than when they were alive. Our wave of love, of brave battle, of sacrifice for truth, of tenderness, sends its ripple over all the ocean of humanity. There is nothing lost of our life. We lay our hands on men from generation to generation, and bless them. Our voice sounds in the ears of a greater number of souls than it did when we were alive. The echoes of earth die, but "our echoes roll from soul to soul, and grow for ever and for ever." There never was a grain of waste of love, of truth, of moral strength, of spiritual inspiration.

Then, too, there is the cry of incompleteness, the cry I have already alluded to. Men die before they have finished their work; and the inference is that the work is not finished. The answer is: first, that all we could do really well of the work is indeed finished; secondly, that the work is not left unfin-



ished, that no good work in this world is ever left incomplete. It is more than probable that we should spoil it if we continued it, as Moses would not have been able to do the work of Joshua. When we have done, as Moses did, what we have power and wisdom for, God, in the order of the world, takes the work out of our hands and gives it to another who will do the rest better than we could do it. If we lived on, the work would then be unfinished. It is by our death that it comes to finish, in the hands of another. A porcelain cup passes, in a great manufactory, from hand to hand till it is completed. A young hand, seeing the cup taken from him without the handle, might think, "Alas, why may I not finish? My work is spoiled." He does not know that another man in the next room will put on the handle better than he.

It is thus in the great work God is doing in the world. We are His workmen; this is His workshop. Endless sub-division of labour prevails in it. Let us do our portion manfully, with all our force and knowledge, and then we may be certain, in the hour of our death, that our labour will be hereafter finished. The work is not only ours, but God's; and He will take care that it is brought to its perfect end. We work with Him; we work also with

all the fellowship of men in earth and in heaven; and our death leaves nothing which will not be taken up into the whole glory of God's work and man's, and fulfilled therein. There is no incompleteness; there is nothing which is left unfinished.

These are thoughts which make the hour of death an hour of joy; which take away from us, when we look upon our dead, all sorrow but the natural sorrow of parting.

And we may well imagine as the evening deepened on the mountain-top, and the land below grew dim in mist, and Moses felt God draw nearer in the twilight, that the same thoughts entered into the soul of Moses, and his regret for not entering the land passed finally away. Nothing was left but death and God. Death and God — with thoughts of these two I close.

The face of death was now changed to him. He had seen him as the depriver of joy and work. As the cold of his presence came closer, he was seen as the releaser and the friend. The dread of death, the hatred of death, belong to vigorous health and life. It is a matter of experience, and it is a comfort to know it, that as death draws near, our dread and hatred disappear in our weakness, and the enemy becomes the friend. We are glad to be at rest.

## *THE DEATH OF MOSES*

The long struggle of Moses was now closed. He remembered how hard had been the battle, how constant the care, how unremitting the toil. He remembered the pain, the sickness, the loneliness; and he was pleased the trouble had come to its close. It was no ignoble memory, nor an ignoble pleasure. The battle had had its proud joy, the pain its noble endurance, the anxiety its steady victory; and there was pleasure in the recollection; and yet, now that the time had come and that it was the will of God, it was a happiness to think that the hour of repose had dawned; that the weary soldier might lay down his armour. He need think no more of the past, nor sorrow any more. The future was before him, and he had earned his rest. Nor should he think any more of not entering into the promised land with Israel. Why should he ever have regretted that? There only wars, fresh cares, new pain, day after day, of weary battle would await him. Here, in death, there was another Canaan, the substance of the shadow he had pursued so long. In it there were green pastures and still waters, and the Shepherd of the soul. "I thank thee, my God, for death, for my release." This was the thought of Moses; for though men of that time had no certain faith in immortality, yet who will not believe that on a spirit like Moses

the truth broke in waves of joy when the hour of parting came?

Much more on us, who do know of immortal life, should the thought arise of the great release that death is to those we love and honour. They have left all the trouble of earth behind. As they died, there opened on them immortal joy, divine repose, the powers of the enfranchised soul. They thanked God for death. Let us thank God that they are now at rest, in that rest which is not sloth but the joy of swift work, which sleeps, like a spinning sphere, for very swiftness.

Lastly, in the depths of the silence God was present with His servant, more vividly, more supremely near to the consciousness of Moses than ever He had been in life. "And the Lord buried Moses." That is the way in which the intensity of God's presence in the dying hour of Moses is represented. The solitude was filled. The eyes of Moses were closed by God.

Indeed, no solitude is greater. There is an hour or more when we hover on the verge of departure, when we go and come, half in, half outside, the house of earthly life, which is quite alone, in which the voices of earth are heard like far-off sounds over great waters. It is then that God is most clear to the consciousness while yet it is on earth; that in

## *THE DEATH OF MOSES*

the dimness of all that belongs to time, His presence is most bright, His name, His nature of love most manifested. There dawns on the dying an infinite revelation. Truth, Love, Beauty, Joy, these things in our minds are but names in comparison with the glory of them, and of the world which they create, which the dying man beholds, when through all his spiritual being God presses now like fire, purifying, kindling, expanding, making all things new. What earthly regret could endure when that splendour of life and light arose upon the soul of the great prophet? The evening fell; the night came on; the landscape of Canaan faded wholly away; the solitude was unbroken on the mountain-top; but the arms of the All-loving were underneath His servant, and the ravishment of eternity opened before him. Death was swallowed up in victory.



THE SONG OF DEBORAH





## THE SONG OF DEBORAH

JUDGES v

NO spiritual interest belongs to the story and the song of Deborah and the victory over Sisera, but a great number of other interests cluster round them, and lead us back into more romantic times than those in which we live. And it may be well on this day, when we shake off the burden of the week, to pass away from all the noise and argument that fill the camps of politics and science, of social movements and theology, and think about some old and warlike story long ago, full of humanity, and seen through the soft atmosphere of antiquity. A romantic story is useful to thought and feeling, even in these utilitarian days.

The first question is a question of inspiration. Does the whole of this account and song represent the very mind of God? Those who maintain the plenary inspiration of the Bible have always been driven into a difficult corner by the praise lavished

in Deborah's song on Jael, who slew while he slept, and while he trusted in her, a ruined fugitive, to whom she had offered hospitality. And this they are obliged to hold to be approved of God, for the song ends: "So may all Thine enemies perish, O Jehovah!" God is thus made the moral sustainer of a fierce and vengeful assassination, wrought in circumstances which double its atrocity, and which would have been abhorrent to the soul of Jesus Christ.

This difficulty, though the same difficulty occurs again and again in the Old Testament, is enough to disperse to the winds the theory of the history in the Bible being fully inspired by God in the sense the theologians give to that term. We believe nothing of the kind. We read this history, and judge it morally, in precisely the same way as we read and judge the history of some such event in the history of Greece or Rome, of England or France. We have in the tale the human sentiments of the time at which it was written and not the views or the words of God. The Song of Deborah is no more than the passionate, poetic utterance of a patriot who belongs to the wild, uncivilised, and unchristian period in which it was composed, and all that it says about God, and about the fight and the slaughter of Sisera, is to be judged

## *THE SONG OF DEBORAH*

in accordance with the morality and theology of the time in which it was written. The morality of the time I leave aside at present, but I consider the theology, so far as it bears on the story, and on the question of inspiration.

The Jehovah of the Hebrews, at this period in their history, was very much like the gods of other nations just emerged from the savage state. He was their own God, the God who defended their country from the gods of other nations the existence of whom the Hebrews did not deny. They thought Him the most powerful of all the gods, and at mortal enmity with them. Nothing could be dearer to Him than that the Israelites should mercilessly slay those who worshipped other gods who disputed His pre-eminence. Such slaughter was the best sacrifice they could make to Him. They were Jehovah's enemies, and the highest goodness was to destroy them. The treachery even which slew one of His foes, was raised above treachery into a righteous act; and we may now imagine how Deborah could cry with full belief in the justice of her cry: "Blessed above women be Jael, wife of Heber the Kenite." The Jehovah, then, of the Hebrews at this time was conceived of as a jealous, fierce, proud, vengeful, and destroying God, delighting in the slaughter of His enemies, eager Himself

to use all His power to help those who blotted out His foes from the face of the earth.

Very much the same conception — the belief in the existence of other gods belonging to other countries being excluded — was held by Mohammed and all his followers. Moreover, the violent Puritans, the violent Catholics, a host of fanatical sects, have believed in this cruel, intolerant God, and modelled their actions on this belief, using all the Old Testament texts which assert the wrath and fury and jealousy of Jehovah as the charter of their iniquities. Even at the present day there are numbers who believe in this terrible representation of God by the fierce Israelites of this savage time, and who, basing themselves on the theory that every word of this book is divine, denounce and persecute those who differ from their view of God. These folk are one of the curses of the world. They add the character of the Jehovah of the book of Judges and other Old Testament books, to the character of the Father revealed by Jesus Christ. Thus they darken and blacken Christianity; and move through this world one of the most fruitful causes of doubt, despair, and atheism. It is high time that they should repent in dust and ashes all the evil they have done.

However, to return to the matter in hand, we

must remember that in this conception of their God, the Hebrews were not at all worse than other people in the same condition of civilization. Indeed, at some points they were better; better in this especially, that in their conception there were other elements which enabled it to grow into the lofty and noble idea of God which the prophets afterwards proclaimed. But the character of their Jehovah at this time was such as I have described; and it cuts deep into the theory that the whole history of this book is fully inspired by the God whom Jesus declared, and whom He called the Father. Those who hold that theory are obliged to hold that the God whom the prophets and the later editors of the Pentateuch declared to be just and merciful, long-suffering, and of great kindness: and still more whom Jesus declared was Love and Pity and Forgiveness, is the same as this furious, avenging, jealous, unforgiving, exclusive, and cruel Jehovah, whom the book of Judges paints in such terrible colours. This is incredible, and it overthrows, and into utter ruin, that theory of inspiration.

But then, when we have got rid of that theory, and read the history, as we read any other early history, it becomes intensely interesting. We pass on straight into the humanity of the story. We

see a young people, and all their young ideas about their God and about their country; we see their desperate struggle against their oppressors to establish themselves as a nation. We listen to their patriotic passion in this ancient Song of Deborah, which dates, it is most probable, from this very time. We know that their thoughts and feelings are natural to their wild and growing condition. We are not now horrified by their savagery, or even by the slaughter of Sisera. Such things belong naturally to the time, and are full of interest. And the whole of the battle, and the joy and rapture of their deliverance, and their valour, and the incidents of the fight, give us all the pleasure of a patriotic tale. And a vivid and brilliant piece of war and of humanity it is!

On the whole, it is historical. Legend, of course, enters into it. The personages are shadowy to the glass of history, but this Song of Deborah, which is one of the oldest bits of writing in the Bible, is enough to tell us that the main outlines of the tale are true. Jabin, King of Hazor, troubled all the Northern tribes. His general was Sisera, and he had many hundred scythed chariots, which on the great plain of Jezreel, to which his power extended, wrought dreadful havoc on the Israelites, charging at full speed over the smooth ground. So grim was

## *THE SONG OF DEBORAH*

the tyranny that none dared walk the roads. But when oppression is deepest the saviour comes, and the bitterness of her people entered into the heart of Deborah. She was then the prophetess of the tribes, and she judged Israel. It was a time when women played, among these patriarchal tribes, a part as active as that of men; both in politics and unwritten literature. Not, indeed, till Solomon introduced the life of the harem did the position of women degenerate among the Israelites. There are plenty of analogies to this among the Arabs, both before and even after Islam, and a whole series of epic stories cluster round the Arabian women who were the chieftains and poets of their tribes. None of them has a greater fame than Deborah, who to this day is loved by the artists and honoured by the oppressed of the whole Christian world. She sat under her palm-tree between Ramah and Bethel in the tribal land of Benjamin, judged the causes, and determined the religion of her own folk. Her wrath was fierce against all who slipped aside from the worship of Jehovah, and all this religious passion mingled with her patriotic rage at the misery of her people to drive her into insurrection. So, in the name of Jehovah, she sent to Barak, the Lightning of Naphtali, to come with all who would follow, to meet her at Mount Tabor. And half the tribes arose

as one man. The other half — those beyond Jordan and Dan and Asser on the sea-board, and Judah and Simeon — remained, indifferent, at home.

So then the forces faced each other. Deborah saw from the heights of Tabor the great plain of Esdraelon, at the further end of which, in Jezreel, lay the army of the Canaanites, in their own territory. Thirteen miles away from Tabor, on a spur of the hills at the south-west corner of the plains, was Taanak, the outlying fortress of the Canaanites; and to this place their host, with all its war-chariots, came; and Deborah, watching from the lofty rock, cried out: "Arise, Barak, lead captive thy captivity, son of Abinoam." So Barak, with his 10,000 men, and all on foot, went out to meet his enemy. While he marched over those thirteen miles, the Canaanites advanced from Taanak to their second fortress of Megiddo, where near at hand a net work of streams, merging into four, fell down among the olives to join the Kishon that flowed in the plain below. There at the waters of Megiddo the battle joined on the level ground. It seemed that the scythed cars would make short work with the Israelite infantry. But as the Hebrews rushed on, uplifting that lion-like roar with which Israel terrified its foes, a mighty storm of hail and freezing rain drove across the plain right into the faces of the Canaanites, as at Creçi, and



## THE SONG OF DEBORAH

troubled the slingers, the archers, the swordsmen, and the chariot-horses. Into the broken ranks dashed the wild Israelites, crying that Jehovah fought for them. The four streams swelled into torrents and flooded the plain. The chariots stuck fast in the sodden ground, and the charioteers were slain. The horse-hoofs hammered the soil in flight. The mighty ones who now rode the chariots strove in vain to flee the terror of battle. Half of them struggled downwards to the river through the marshy ground. But Kishon now was in furious flood, and this part of the Canaanite army was engulfed in its clashing torrent. The rest fled along by Endor, to the east, and perished there, and became as the dung of the earth (Ps. lxxxiii. 10). It was a glorious day, long remembered in Israel, and nobly sung in poetry:—

The Kings came and fought;  
Then fought the Kings of Canaan  
At Taanak, by the waters of Megiddo!  
Not heavy was the silver that they took!

From the height of heaven the stars fought;  
Out of their courses, they fought with Sisera.  
Forward, O my soul, forward hardily!

Then the hoofs of the horses beat upon the ground,  
In the gallop, in the flying gallop of the mighty ones.  
The torrent of Kishon has swept them away—  
That ancient torrent, the torrent of Kishon.

But Sisera fled for his life, and came to the Kenite, who were friends of Israel. The chief was away from the tent, but the woman took him in, gave him milk and when he slept smote one of the tent-pegs into his head, and nailed him to the ground; and splendid in poetry is the passage in which this fierce deed is recorded.

At her feet he bows, he falls, he lies,

At her feet he bows, he falls;

Where he has bowed himself, there he falls down dead.

And no sooner was this murder done than Barak came by, hot in pursuit, and saw his foe dead, with joy. The same day Deborah met him, and the prophetess changed into the poetess. Like a Norse scald, she sang the rising, the battle, and the death of the last enemy; and ended in a passage of scorn and mockery rarely equalled in the literature of war.

When we take the song in this natural fashion, and are not forced by a theory of inspiration to reconcile it with the Christian mercy and loving-kindness; when we try no longer to accord the spirit of Jesus with that of Deborah and Barak and Jael; when we listen to it as the impassioned ode of a mother in Israel, who loved her people, who hated the recreants who did not come to the help of the Lord against the mighty, who blessed the patriot bands, who cried to herself: "Arise, arise, Deborah,

arise, and thunder forth the song of battle;" who watched with burning eyes the handful of men go down from Tabor against their enemies; when we realise the passion of a people furious with oppression which spoke from her lips; when we think of these things, our whole heart goes with her song; we understand how she could curse Meroz, how she could bless the slayer of Sisera, how she could mock the misery of his mother and her maids. It is a war-song, a patriot's song; and it is human, if it be not Christian.

Then the power of fine literature comes upon us in it. Of all the Israelite songs it is the most poetical. Learnt by heart, and sung from generation to generation, it became the model of the Jewish war-song. When it was put in writing it suffered changes; the copyists made it obscure in parts; pious phrases stole in. But it remains but little spoiled, clear in its originality, well ordered in its sections, extraordinarily vivid in its sight of the things described. Few things are finer than the passage where she brings all the classes of the people, in rapid sketching, before our eyes, from the heads of the tribes to the shepherds on the hills; from the rich passing by on their white asses to the village patriarchs sitting on their carpets, and the travellers on foot, and binds them all up with the conquests of Jehovah:

*THE OLD TESTAMENT AND MODERN LIFE*

My heart is with the chiefs of Israel,  
Who gave their lives for the people. Bless the Lord,  
O ye that ride on white asses,  
Ye that sit on the carpets,  
Ye that walk on the highways,  
Ye that whistle to your flocks beside the water-troughs,  
Sing aloud ;  
Praise the great conquests of Jehovah,  
The conquests of his chiefs in Israel,  
When the folk of Jehovah went down unto the gates.

Then comes the personal outburst : —

Awake! awake! Deborah,  
Awake, arise, utter the song ;  
Up, Barak,  
Lead captive captivity, son of Abinoam.

Could anything be better? There is not a feeble phrase in the whole song. It is poured forth on the very evening of the battle, hot with the excitement of victory and the joy of a great deliverance, not wrought with reflection or with literary care — a true popular song, ringing with the timbrels of victory and the cymbals of scorn. The best war-literature in the world rises out of these early times before writing was known, and was sung by the bard in the evening feast, by the women who danced before the victors.

As to the deed of Jael, no theory of inspiration forces me to try and excuse it, like those folk who

## THE SONG OF DEBORAH

invent the story that Sisera had offered outrage to Jael. Her deed we should call deliberate and traitorous murder. It was a woman's deed. No tribesman of the time would have violated the laws of hospitality, would have given Sisera bread and salt and then slain him in sleep. He would have smitten Sisera down at the tent door. But Jael could not do that. The weakness of the woman drove her to treachery, and she longed to fulfil her hatred. There is hatred in every line of the story; fierce and abiding hatred.

And a woman praised the deed. No man of the time could have praised it. No Arab of to-day would praise it. But the hour in which it was praised was that of the wild exultation of victory and deliverance; and what the warriors would not have themselves praised, they listened to with hidden pleasure. Deborah heard that the curse of her land, the great brute who had crushed her people, was foully slain. She would have been more than mortal, at that time of history, if she had not praised the doer of the deed. The murder and the praise of it were both natural enough. We call it treachery; so would the men of the time. But at the hands of Jael the murder was natural, and on the lips of Deborah the praise of it was natural.

And now there is little more to say. We can get

no Christian morality, no spiritual lessons, out of this history. It satisfies the warlike element in us. It satisfies the imagination, but it does not satisfy the spirit of the love of Jesus. His life, His death, brought us into another world than that which mocked the mother of the slaughtered and blest the slayer of the fugitive. His blood spoke better things than the blood of Abel, which cried for vengeance; than the lips of Deborah, that rejoiced in carnage. "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do" is a whole world apart from "So perish all thine enemies, O Jehovah!" It is well always to realise this change. It would be better if we always lived in its atmosphere. But the savage, fierce, and bloody elements in man are not dead, though they are decaying. Not a hundred years ago, war was more brutal than in the days of Deborah. Deeds a hundredfold worse than Jael's deformed the taking of every town. Even now we hear, only too often, of merciless vengeance, of indiscriminate slaughter, and call upon the priests of God the Father to sing *Te Deums* with as fierce an insolence of ignorance of the Christian God as Deborah, in her ignorance of the true God, called upon Jehovah. Thousands of years have rolled by. A world of mercy has been proclaimed by Jesus. We know a Father in heaven, and not a God of

vengeance; but how much of the lesson have we learnt? Something, I think, but not the tenth part of what is demanded from us.

More and more will be demanded. The deepest curse of all wars, even of just war, is in the vengeance which exultation in victory, along with heated blood, takes on the beaten foe. Such vengeance is not only felt and taken by men with arms in their hands. In our social wars, class wreaks its wrath after victory on class; and the temper which makes the war continue is fed and nourished into deeper wrath. The taking of vengeance instead of the giving of forgiveness is the reason why so many successful risings against oppression have failed to produce a tenth of the results they ought to have produced, and have so often issued in a new oppression. That is the great lesson of the close of the French Revolution. It is not that rising against oppression is wrong; on the contrary, it is a thousand times right. But the savage, brutal way of warring against oppression, the brutal revenge taken for the wrongs of the past — that is wrong, and it turns a righteous struggle into unrighteousness, and so into failure. Revolution is often right. The vengeance of revolution is wrong. The rising of a people against tyrannous oppression has the sympathy of the Old Testament. Israel, in all her history, stands against oppression; cries in

the name of its God, "Let my people go, that they may serve me;" makes God on the side of the wars for freedom. The Jews have led the van of liberty. Deborah's patriotic passion, Moses' deliverance of his nation, the cries of Isaiah and the prophets have shaken the hearts of tyrants with fear and uplifted the hearts of the afflicted peoples up to the present day. Still we quote their words, still we write them on our banners, even though the wars we wage against oppression be not waged with the sword, but by the votes and speech of the people. Of such wars for civic justice God the Father is indeed the head. But when we make Him the head, we exclude vengeance from our war, and replace it, on conquest, by forgiveness. The whole of the future of our strife against injustice, the whole of its true success, the whole of the cause of the oppressed workers, the whole of the better civilisation of mankind, lies hid in the winning of that temper of forgiveness, in the enthroning in our minds of the spirit of Jesus towards the injurers of humanity, in the belief that the oppressor is also a brother, in the worship, not of the Jehovah of the Old Testament histories, but of the Father of mankind.



THE CALL OF SAMUEL



# I

## THE CALL OF SAMUEL

*"Samuel did not yet know the Lord, nor was the word of the Lord yet revealed to him."*

I SAMUEL iii. 7, &c.

THIS story, which is so full of human interest, may have some historical value, but what it is no one can tell. Nor is it any use to try and discover it, for we can come to no conclusion. We do not even know the date at which it was edited from the old stories into the beginning of the book of Samuel, and therefore we can draw no information from it as to the way in which, at a fixed date, men thought about God and human life. Its interest then is not the interest of history, considered as the record of events. And as we never can be quite sure of the absolute correctness of the record of any series of events in the past; no, not even when ten years instead of ten hundred have elapsed, the historical value of the record is not of the highest human importance. True history lies, not in the statement

of events of which we cannot be certain how they occurred, but in the statement of how men at any time thought and felt. The record of the thinking and feeling of the human race is the only history worth careful considering, for of the truth of that record we can be certain. The rest is the serious amusement of a scientific hour by which we gain materials for conversation or entertainment or the play of criticism and investigation — things which are pleasant, but scarcely grave or even useful knowledge. Here, for example, the statement of what Eli and Samuel did is of no importance, for we cannot be sure of its truth, but the thoughts of the writer or editor of the story, the way he felt as he wrote, are certain. We know what his temper was towards the question of the relation between God and man. We know his moral temper; we know how he felt on the question of national righteousness and unrighteousness; we know what he thought concerning child life and its relation to God; we know what he thought concerning the business and the character of a prophet, of a seer. This is certain knowledge, and we probably know through him what a number of other persons — at the indefinite time he wrote — were also thinking and feeling. Things of this kind are the real certainties of history, and historians generally neglect them, pre-

ferring, with the curious wrong-headedness which belongs to so much of human science, to investigate that of which they never can have any clear knowledge.

The history of the race is in the history of what men thought and felt ; and it is written, not in annals, not in chronicles, not in State papers, not in the stores of the Record Offices of nations, but in the literatures of the tribes and peoples of mankind. There is truth worth knowing ; all the rest is pleasant enough, but it is only more or less probable in comparison with the certainty we attain when we read a poem or a story, of how men thought and what they felt. When I speak then, of this tale to-day, I speak of it only as I should speak of the legend of King Arthur — of a story, that is, which tells us no accurate truth, so far as outward facts are concerned, but which does tell us with extraordinary clearness, so far as it goes, what the writer and his contemporaries of the same temper as himself thought and felt concerning religion, human life, men, women, and children, in their social, national, and domestic relations. Here is our interest and our undying interest. All other interests are transient, this is for ever young. The mountains wear away, the solid surface of the earth is in perpetual change, the fertile fields become a desert, the

desert a fruitful field. Civilisation after civilisation perishes, the mighty works of men are blown to dust, cities that were the marts and monarchs of great empires are ruins where the bittern cries: all things pass and fleet. There is only one thing which at its root remains the same, only one thing which is eternal. It is the human heart and all it feels, the human will and all it desires. And this book, from which in this place we preach, has its mightiest value and its abiding interest, not in the events recorded, which are subjects of criticism, but in its being the story of human life, and human passion, and human thought employed on the subject of their relation to the God that man conceives, in whom he believes or disbelieves, whom he loves or hates, and whose self-revelation in the heart he receives or rejects at will. What did this writer think concerning these matters as he wrote his story? That is our question. And the answer comes to us over more than two thousand years, and yet it is not apart from us, so unchanged in its great relations is humanity.

“Samuel did not yet know the Lord, nor was the word of the Lord yet revealed to him.” This is the first thing the writer thinks, and he describes in it the state of youth, innocent as yet, even unconscious of God. Yet, in the tale, Samuel is surrounded with religious influences. He is dedicated from his birth

to the Lord, brought up by the head-priest at Shiloh, and he passed his whole time in the public service of God. But God was nothing to him but a name; it was Eli he obeyed, not God. There was no knowledge in his own heart of sin, and therefore, as yet, no consciousness of a personal Righteousness beyond himself who had to do with him. Nor could he gain consciousness of God and His goodness through the knowledge of evil in others. He was protected. Shut out from the world of Israel in the cool and solemn tents of the Tabernacle, he could not know that a lawless people raged and sinned beyond its curtains. Ignorant of God and ignorant of man, it will be a solemn and awful hour when the knowledge of both together comes upon him.

It is a condition in which the greater number of comfortable children are at the present day. Some thousands of years have wrought no change in this piece of early human life. They obey their parents, who represent God to them. They are ignorant of sin within them and without them. They are too happy to have, as yet, great curiosities such as drive us out homeless over the deserts of vain thinking. Their love and faith are as yet strong; no ingratitude has tainted the one, and no disappointment shocked the other. Sheltered within the fold of home, they have as yet no aspiration beyond the

heaven that lies about them on this earth. Ignorant of sin, they are unconscious of righteousness. God is with them, but they know Him not. How can a child conceive the immeasurable and awful vision of the Eternal Spirit who speaks in the silence? It must first grasp and realise the natural. I do not say children are not happy in the sense of an invisible care, that they have not impressions which are too great for utterance, vague feelings of the infinite when nature unfolds to them at night her solemn breast, and they are drawn to feed at it, they know not why; impressions which tell them a new life of thought and passion is at hand, with which they alone will have to do, and which are the first thrillings of that personal life with God which will be theirs hereafter—but they do not understand what these vague impressions mean. They cannot feel (and it is false education to try and make them feel) what the Psalmist felt when he said: “If I ascend up into heaven, Thou art there; if I go down to hell, Thou are there also.” In truth, such a sense of a solemn presence haunting life does not come till sin and sorrow in our own heart or in other men around us, have opened the doors of a new and dreadful world, and innocence has gone for ever.

We are bound not to antedate the spiritual life of our children, lest we make them false. But all the



more we must remember that the ideas they will hereafter have of God will be dependent on what we are to them. They will think God loving, just, and true in proportion as we are loving, true, and just. If their home be selfish, mean, a place of contention, of unhappiness, they will only believe, when they become men and women, in hell and in a God who makes it. This is the dread responsibility of a parent's life. For the time will come when the child will for himself, like Samuel, hear the voice of God; and how he hears it will depend on us.

Ignorant of God in this deep and grave fashion, Samuel was of course ignorant also of humanity. Before he should become a prophet, he had also to learn the sad and serious knowledge of humanity. The first condition of religious inspiration is holiness of life, which has passed through sin and conquered goodness, and which sees into God's doings with men, because it knows the laws on which absolute righteousness works. But the second condition is knowledge of the heart of man, knowledge of it through sympathy and love. The heart of the prophet must beat in accordance with the general heart of man, must feel, as if they were his own, the wants, the passions, the unformed yearnings and desires of his time. He must be able to receive the multitudinous impulses which come from without.

to harmonise and co-ordinate them, to generalise them into a few principles, to embody them in a few words, to make these words war-cries, and to say: "This is what you mean, write it on your banners, fight and work for it till the death."

None of this a boy can know or feel, though visions of it may float before him, if he have genius. Only when he leaves the guarded tabernacle, and, loving men, goes in and out among them, do the vast problems press upon his spirit, does he feel the passion of a saviour, or hear in his heart the great cry of troubled men and women: "Come and help us." Samuel was to be such a man, but the word of the Lord was not revealed to him as yet, that word which bids a man "Arise, and love men, go forth and tell them that which will redeem them."

And this ignorant state is not the state of children only. There are many who, while men and women, are living in this ignorance, and are no better than infants. They never think of their own existence, nor of God's; never question why they were born, nor what they are, nor whither they are going. They never see anything to astonish their intellect or shock their heart in the great world, in the vast sorrows, struggles, passions, and joys of the human race. They never live in the invisible, never feel its call, never look beyond the hour and the

impulse of the work of the hour. God is as much a dream to them as humanity. Fleeting feelings, fleeting thoughts, fleeting pleasures, sorrows which die because they disturb their amusement, loves which fail because they demand too much of them — engage them, impel them, and leave them. They are sea-birds which skim the surface of life's sea, and never dive to penetrate the depths of it: the word of the Lord which bids them help their fellows never revealed to them; equally unable to feel the imperative of God, or to understand the destinies of man — a state of protracted childhood.

It is a pitiable condition. When we become men and women we must put away childish things. We ought to know ourselves, to know God, and to know our brother men; and knowing ourselves, to become humble; and knowing God, to worship Him by growing like Him in holiness; and knowing our brothers, to love them and devote our life to them. If we are not awakened yet, it is time we were; time that we heard within us the great cry that awakened the universe into form: "Let there be light;" time that we heard that personal cry: "Samuel, Samuel."

It is well for those who hear and receive it early, when first they stand on the threshold of the great Temple of life and look into its vastness; who hear

and recognise in it the voice of God and the voice of humanity, and dedicate themselves to the service of both—a service which is not two, as some think, but always one. In what way that great event happens to the young differs as characters differ, but how it happened in the idea of the writer who tells this story, lies before you; and fairly and nobly it is conceived in that poetic form in which universal truth is enshrined most clearly. The Lord called Samuel by name. A voice broke on the silence of night. Twice Samuel mistook it for Eli's voice, twice he was undeceived. At last he knew it for what it was—the voice of God.

This is the way the spiritual truth is shaped for us. The call came when the Tabernacle was hushed, when the lamp went out, and Samuel was laid down to sleep. In solitude and silence, when the voices of the day's disturbance are at rest, God is heard speaking in the heart. So it has ever been. The soul opens its doors to listen when the sounds which attack the senses are not heard. The Invisible One is felt in our consciousness in the lonely places of the earth. There are strange whispers which beset us when the heart is wearied of the world, when work seems vanity, when pleasure is removed, when life passes before us like a dream. We seem to know then what we really are, and wait for a revela-

## THE CALL OF SAMUEL

tion. Then the everlasting Father calls His son, and calls him by his name: "Samuel, Samuel, know me; remember me, love me. I stretch out my hands to thee. I am thy father, hear my voice; come, my child, learn of me righteousness and love, duty and the power of redeeming." It is a personal cry. He who calls, we know then, is akin to us, a living One who lives for us, with love to answer our love.

Have we never heard Him speak thus to us, never heard in the ear of the spirit His solemn and noble word, never known that ineffable passion of longing for more and more of Him who is our only true rest, which made the poet cry: "As the hart panteth after the water brooks, so longeth my soul after Thee, O God?" If never, why then we have not as yet known God as one with whom we stood alone, individually linked to Him for ever, in obedience and in love. And not to know God in this way is not to be a conscious servant of His, is to have no support, no power beyond humanity, is not to be certain of endless progress, is not to be master of oneself and of the world to come.

But if we have heard Him speak in this way, how have we received His word? With joy perhaps at first, with hope, excitement, eager faith? Yes, perhaps so. But the question for us all is: How long has the eagerness lasted; has the faith grown cold;

have the ideals become worn out by length of time; has the hope been chilled by trial; has the perseverance grown craven; have we, who placed ourselves in the front of the battle, fled from it to take our pleasure, or deserted to the army of selfish wealth and engrossing sin and the transient world? Alas, this is an experience we all have known, save a happy few. But in the silences of life we are troubled by echoes of the ancient cry; nor do we ever quite forget what we have once listened to in youth, what once we have thrilled to hear. And at least, if we have not obeyed, or fallen from obedience, God does not forget. If we have no perseverance, He has. Our leaving of Him, our neglect of righteousness, love and justice, of our duties to men; our selfish, vain, or idle life, bring with them their necessary fruits. We must eat them, and we are poisoned by them. Bitterness, loneliness, sorrow, misery of heart, are ours by law. And then He speaks again: "Come unto me, weary and heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me, for I am meek and lowly in heart, and ye shall find rest to your soul." So we hear Him in the words of Jesus.

And, tired with long ploughing under the yoke of our own will, which weighed heavier and heavier as the years went by; tired out by sowing and never

## *THE CALL OF SAMUEL*

reaping; worn with the trouble of loving ourselves only, and with the loneliness it brings; sick at last of the lie of accusing others as the cause of our troubles, when their cause is in ourself; contrite and broken-hearted, but desiring to love God and to take all the consequences of loving Him; eager to be loved by Him, for we are too much alone; longing to try righteousness and to rest in its peace, to forgive others and to forgive ourselves — we answer, at last, in the darkness of life's tabernacle: "Speak Lord, for Thy servant heareth."





## II

### THE CALL OF SAMUEL

*"Samuel did not yet know the Lord, nor was the word of the Lord yet revealed to him."*

I SAMUEL iii. 10-18.

AS the story of the call of Samuel goes on, it becomes even more vividly realised by the writer, and more full of natural truth, that is, of truth to human nature. When Samuel went to lie down again in the silence, and listened for the voice, it came once more, and Samuel answered it at last: "Speak, for Thy servant heareth." And the voice told him of sin and death and judgment; and he lay until the morning, for he could not sleep with the new rush of dreadful knowledge in his heart, and with the sentence of stern justice loitering in his ears. All the old sanctities of childhood were despoiled; all the old reverences of his boyhood were invaded and stript of their glory. Eli, his teacher, whom he loved, was condemned for his weakness of character. He knew that the people of Jehovah, whom he had

conceived as pure, were lawless and defiled. Within the very precincts of the Tabernacle, where he had thought that evil could not enter, lust and greed ran riot. With the knowledge of all this suddenly in his heart, the child lay restless all the night.

We understand all that the story contains, when we take it, not as a piece of history, but as a poetic representation of the way in which the knowledge of the evil of the world comes for the first time on childhood or youth. I do not say that the writer meant it to be symbolic. On the contrary, he probably thought he was writing history. But being a poet and creator, he unconsciously shaped the story in such a fashion that it expresses things which are true at all times of the greater number of young men and women. When on a youth who has been sheltered at home through childhood, the voice of the infinite world without him first breaks, he does not believe in its reality. He cannot understand that it is a true voice from without that he hears. Again and again he mistakes it for the voice of Eli for the voice of his customary life. At last he is convinced of its truth, and then he is all one listening ear. The outward world and all it has to say flows in upon him like a tide, and on the tide comes the knowledge of sin and sorrow, pain and judgment. The paradise of pure youth is broken into,

its sun darkened, its flowers withered. It is a dreadful revelation, and brings with it a sleeplessness of soul, an incessant questioning in the intellect. Night is around the youth, and he lies in it absorbed in thought, often absorbed in sorrow. "Speak," he cries, to that which he does not recognise for whom He is, "speak, for Thy servant heareth." It is the first disillusion, and though the after disillusiones of life are bitterer, and take longer to recover from, because they fall upon a lonelier heart and a stronger soul, this also has its own peculiar note of pain, — a note which is never repeated, and therefore is keenly remembered.

How did Samuel receive the knowledge? Or how did this old writer conceive that he received it? He took it quietly; he lay still; he rose in the morning to do the ordinary business of life, to open the doors of the Tabernacle. He told all he knew with simplicity to Eli when he was questioned, but not till then. He was awed and solemnised, but he kept his child-like simplicity. And though all he said to Eli was blame of Eli, he told the absolute truth. And free from pride or vanity, free from diseased curiosity about evil, free from hurried impetuosity, he went on doing his daily work, though all Israel, we are told, knew that he was called to be a prophet of the Lord.

How do we receive our first knowledge of evil?

For the most part, in this society of ours, with but little awe. With no sense or but a transitory sense of the sternness of moral law, and the certainty of moral judgments. We are too light; too carelessly brought up. We ought to be gay and happy, but we ought not to be incapable of feeling the solemnity of life when it opens before us. Nay more, it is not only this negative position which we occupy, we receive this knowledge often with a morbid curiosity of evil. Desirous of knowing it, we run into its embrace. Instead of Samuel's serious quiet, we are filled with excitement about unknown things which we are told are wrong. Excitement in itself is right and natural in youth; but morbid curiosity of the young concerning evil is the mark of a decaying society, and it is one of the worst symptoms of our present society, from the highest to the lowest in the scale. There are those who call it natural to youth; but its saddest result proves its unnaturalness. It destroys the youth of those who indulge it, and that mode of living and thinking cannot be natural to youth which brings on youth, before its time, decay and death. The number of aged young men and women whom we meet now, or who profess that they are old, and boast of it, which indeed is the same thing as being old, would be amusing if it were not so serious a symptom of national disease.

And, after all, when they have satisfied their curiosity, and lost their aspiration, they know nothing at all of life. For the knowledge of evil is not knowledge of human nature. It is knowledge of its diseases, not of its health; and that is as much true knowledge of human nature as our knowledge of our friend would be true knowledge of his character if we judged him from what we saw of him when he was suffering from fever, or dying of consumption. The true knowledge of human nature is the knowledge of it when its body is healthy, its mind sound, its soul aspiring, and its spirit full of love. That is a knowledge of things as they are rightly; and when we know them in that way, we can know the diseases of human nature far better than the man who only knows it in disease. That is a good, honest, scientific statement, and every physician will support the analogy to it in his own practice. On one side is the eager pursuit of this morbid curiosity, when evil is first revealed to youth, a useful or a wise thing. "I know life," these poor creatures say in their vanity. "Tush, man!" is the proper answer, "you know disease, decay, and death, and you are no better than a fool for knowing them so well."

And, now, what makes the difference between this reception of the knowledge of evil, and that of

Samuel? It was that Samuel had something even then of the prophet's nature in him. He saw, or, being a child, he felt unconsciously the great moral laws on which the universe is worked. Behind the sin and sorrow and changes of this mortal life, he felt that which was quiet, unshaken, eternal, which could not be changed. When he touched evil, he knew it was doomed to overthrow. When he saw decay, he was certain of judgment coming on it. When he was conscious of moral weakness, as in Eli, he felt that its fruit would be overthrow. When he heard of the reckless lawlessness of the people, he beheld the invisible results. Right and wrong were clearly set over, one against another, in his mind, and the right seemed beautiful and worthy of aspiration, and the evil ugly and not worth his curiosity. Having then this sense of clear law and its sanctions, he was naturally quiet. He could not give help to Eli. Eli had to eat the fruits of what he had done. He could love him, sympathise with him, help him to bear trouble; but he could not take the trouble away. That must come. And for himself, all he had to do was to do his nearest duty, and by-and-bye to tell others what moral law was; what inevitably followed on good, and inevitably followed on evil. Naturally, such a mind was solemnised and still. Yet there was nothing in the awe which

should prevent the brightness, the keen life, the ardour of youth having full swing. On the contrary, the ruling of action within the limits of moral rightness enabled him, and will enable us, within these limits, to have joy, excitement, and freedom. The limits increase the pleasure.

“We have not the prophet’s nature,” you may say. No, perhaps not, to that degree. But what I do say is this: “It is a parent’s fault if the child, girl or boy, has not, when it first gains the knowledge of evil, that sense of the certainty and irrevocableness of the moral laws of the universe with which the prophet is by nature gifted. Those who have it not by nature, ought to have been made acquainted with it by education. No child, from its earliest years, should be left without this conception. It ought to be inwoven into every fibre of his being. “What you sow,” we should say to our children, “that you inevitably reap. If you sow love, you reap love; if you sow good, its fruit is goodness. If you sow selfishness you will reap selfishness. If you sow hatred, impurity, unpitifulness, hatred and unpitifulness and impurity you will reap. If you do good, your society and your nation will be stronger, nobler, more aspiring. If you do evil, your family, society, and nation will be weaker, meaner, and more ready to decay.” These are things easy to

remember, easy to illustrate. They are absolute certainties, and the settled conviction of them will make the first revelation of evil a trial to the young, not a temptation; an occasion of rising and not of falling; a solemn, not a frivolous hour; a time when they will gird themselves with joy to battle with wrong; and not a time when they will, unarmed, and most like a follower of Bacchus and not of Christ, run headlong into those snares of evil where life is defeated, and power rendered unavailing.

But this — to know evil as evil, and to recognise that it is against the laws of the universe; that it is death and not life; that we are to be its enemy and not its friend — this is not the whole of the prophet's nature. There is another side to it. It is to see good as clearly as evil; nay more, to see the good first, and to see the evil by means of the good; to understand falsehood through knowledge of truth, selfishness through the love of love, injustice through the practice of justice. That is the right order, for seen in that order, we do not despair of the world. If we only see evil, or see it chiefly, we see nothing but death and judgment for the world; we have no hope, no faith for the human race; and our prophecy, that is our telling of truth, terrifies the world through menace, and does but little good. This was the fault of John the Baptist. It seems to have been the



## *THE CALL OF SAMUEL*

fault of the Samuel of this story. He had little hope of Israel in after days. He was in so much despair when he grew old, that he neglected or alienated his own sons as Eli had done. He had no vision of David, nor of the resurrection of his people; no forward look, no ideal dreams. He died sorrowful, only half a prophet; ending much as Eli ended; almost in a wearied acquiescence in judgment; a fatalist in his old age. Do you remember that last touch in the story concerning Eli? Samuel told Eli all — his own ruin, the ruin of his sons, the overthrow of his people. The old man heard him to the end, and then — and how vivid is the truth to human nature in that easy character which had let things slide — he folded his hands and acquiesced. "It is the Lord, let Him do what seemeth Him good." He was too tired to complain, too old even to be sorry. It was just; but he could not help it. Only when the misery came he broke his heart and died. He too saw no salvation, had no vision of a happier time. He saw the judgment, but presaged no resurrection. This is the weak side of the prophet-nature, and there are many examples of it in history.

It is well now to put the other side, the side of the prophet-nature which, seeing good as clearly as evil, does not despair of the world of men, but

goes forth in hope to redeem it. And we shall see that side if we look at the story of the Day of Pentecost. Around the assembly of the faithful after the death of Jesus, lay a decaying world. Greece had perished; the decadence of Rome had begun in luxury; the Jewish people had lost religion in self-righteousness and party spirit. Art was mere imitation and literature was passing into satire. If those who met at Jerusalem did not feel all these losses, they had enough of the prophet's sense to feel the passing away of righteousness, and of deep feeling which is life, in the world; yet they were not depressed.

Moreover, they had seen with their own eyes the triumph of evil over goodness. Rome and Judea had slain the Just One. Hatred had, it seemed, conquered love, and injustice righteousness. Samuel would have wailed, Eli would have acquiesced, John the Baptist would have thundered his denunciation. "The wicked world is doomed, our people lost, there is nothing left but to call down fire from heaven on man. There is only lamentation left for the good and hopelessness for the weak."

Was this their spirit, this their temper? No, indeed. They had an audacious joy and power in them of faith and love and hope. They denounced

## *THE CALL OF SAMUEL*

the evil, it is true, but it was to bid men repent of it, and be saved from it. Evil and death were doomed; their Master had overcome both. He was risen, and His spirit of life and salvation was now in the world. Therefore, though they saw the evil, they saw far more clearly the coming and the conquering good. They saw a world which they thought dead, but they foretold a resurrection. They saw the oppressed, but they prophesied their deliverance. They saw the broken-hearted, but they said a world of joy was theirs. They saw the lost, but they said that they had a Saviour.

This was the vision that rescued them from the prophet's lamentation and despair. It did more; it lifted them into the prophet's ecstasy. They broke into inarticulate cries of joy, into the wild inspiration of youthful delight. Words fail the writer of the Acts of the Apostles to express all that tradition told him that they felt. The house seemed to shake with the thrilling of their spirits. Flickering tongues as of fire seemed to settle on their heads, the emblem of the new fire of life lit within them. A rushing, mighty wind seemed to blow away decay and sorrow and sin, and to pour into their hearts life and joy; to blow life into the dry bones of mankind. Their souls presaged, though their minds did not grasp,

the golden age of man that all the great poets have seen. The spirit of the living God filled them with the utterance of the good news they brought to men of peace and joy and righteousness. The poor, the sick, the sorrowful, the old men, passing away from life, the young beginning it, were lifted alike into the ideal world; the workman, the slave, all women as well as men, were joyous with the burden of a glorious prophecy. "This is that," cried one of them, in most exultant mood, "which was written by the prophet Joel: 'And it shall come to pass in those days, saith the Lord, that I shall pour out of my spirit on all flesh, and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, and your old men shall dream dreams, and your young men see visions; and on your servants and your handmaidens I shall pour out my spirit, and they shall prophesy.' "

Yes, this is the other side of the prophet element — that which, when evil has been clearly seen and doomed, declares a resurrection; which, when an old world is passing away, tells in joy of a new world which will rise from the grave and go forth, once more with youth and inspiration, conquering and to conquer; the world where old men dream dreams and young men see visions where the servants and the handmaidens of the decaying great and the use-

less rich drink of the spirit of the Lord, and bear in their thoughts, and in the passions of their ideas, the regenerative principles of a new society.

This, then, is the conclusion. In both these fashions of the prophet we are to regard the world in which we work and move; first, with clear sight of its evil, because we have clear sight of righteousness; and secondly, with clear sight of its good, because we believe that God lives and that He is the Saviour of mankind. We look, then, on human life, not as mere pessimists, nor yet as mere optimists; not as those who only see evil or only see good; but as men, on the contrary, who have a stern war to wage against wrong, decay, and death; who are bound to hate these things and to destroy them, but who think that the very worst way in the world to meet them is to say that they are ineradicable, that while we live we cannot get rid of them; who, therefore, see their enemy clearly and know his deformity, but who, having known also in Jesus man as he ought to be, look forward to the health of human nature, and work for it with inspiration; who, believing in God, cannot even conceive that He will finally leave His children; and therefore see, beyond the defeats of earth, the final victory, beyond the sin of earth salvation, beyond its failures accomplishment, beyond its hatreds love, beyond its

lies the Truth Himself. The knowledge of evil is ours, but it does not damp our aspiration nor chill our work. The knowledge of good is ours, and it often lifts that work into the Pentecostal ecstasy and the Pentecostal prophecy.

DAVID





# I

## DAVID, THE SHEPHERD

*"And He chose David also His servant, and took him from the sheepfolds: from following the ewes great with young He brought him to feed Jacob his people, and Israel his inheritance."*

PSALM lxxviii. 70, 71.

IN the story of David an historical element is mixed with a legendary element. We have also his story, after his youth as a shepherd, written from two points of view, from the side of the priest party and the side of the prophet or popular party which stood against the priestly clan, that is, we have the story written with two distinct tendencies, and the bias on both sides leads them both away from fact. Yet much of the story is plainly historical. It is plain that David was what we should call an honest burgher's son, and that he kept the flocks of his father on the hills about his native place. He rose to his kingship out of the level of the people, having no advantage of birth more than another. It is plain he was of great physical beauty, strength, and courage, with an eagerness in him

for fighting. It is plain he was a born leader of men, and he shows this not only as the young hero of the army, but as the outlaw, the free-companion, the king, and the lawgiver. It is plain that he was early mixed up with the court of Saul, and that the eyes of the people were more and more fastened upon him. It is plain that he was driven from the tents of Saul, and that he lived an outlaw's life, and collected round him a band of daring companions who lived by plunder of their foes, and by blackmail levied on their countrymen. It is plain that when he was made king he united under him the contending political parties in Israel. It is plain that he was the first who welded into one nation the different tribes and made them feel themselves a homogeneous people. It is plain that he took Jerusalem, and made it—to further promote this unity—the capital, the centre of the kingdom. It is plain that his first years as king were stormy, and that he had to fight his way against many parties to confessed overlordship. It is plain that he had to face a great rebellion arising within his own home. It is plain that he created a kind of standing army, an ordered government, an established religion, and that these important things made steadfast the national unity of Israel. It is plain that having done these things, he not only weak-

ened the frontier foes of Israel, but made many of them tributary. At his death Israel had taken her place. She was lifted from a mere congeries of tribes into a recognised kingdom.

These were great works, and they prove a great man. But he was not only great in this fashion. He was also a man of an enchanting and varied personality, and his genius extended into art. He won passionate love from his men, and his example made them heroic — one of those sympathetic, chivalric soldiers, who, easily moved to feeling, do such pictorial and romantic actions, in the rush of their pity or joy, that the acts remain like living things in the memory of a nation. Romance clustered round him, and was the source of the universal power of his story. He resembles — as his time resembles their time — one of the saga heroes of the days of the folk-wanderings. He resembles some of those heroes too in this, that he was a great singer. The sweet harp playing of David and his songs are a consistent element in every account of him, and a steady tradition. His passion in this was, as many of the stories hint, wholly self-forgetful. He lost himself in the impulse of song, and with the song he mingled the dance. He was impulsive in all things, and of course most impulsive in love, the greatest of all the passions. The love

of women was always his, and once at least it led him into deep and dishonourable guilt. But his love of his children and of his friends, of Absalom as of Jonathan, was as intense as his love of women. With all this he mingled, and it is a strange mixture, the cool and, not unfrequently, the cruel policy of the Oriental. He had a cynical prudence in politics, a resolute way of sacrificing human lives when they stood in the way of his aims, a deliberation in falsehood and feigning when these would win a personal or political success, which shocks us, but which would have been praised by an Oriental, even by a Greek. Nevertheless, these evils did not belong to his youth, but to the time when wealth and power and old age had lessened his chivalry and somewhat spoiled his soul.

These matters are all historical. But we must also remember that there was certain to gather round his name and life a succession of legends. Many of the stories we read of him cannot be true to fact, as we have them; and we must set aside those portions which are clearly due to party bias or to the love of supernaturalism. We speak of his story then, not as an actual statement of fact, but as the conception which later writers, and the people of Israel in general, had of a great king and hero. It was a national conception. It reveals to us the

character the Hebrews loved and honoured. It was a religious conception. It reveals to us the sort of man they conceived to be after God's own heart; and how they thought that God dealt with him; and what they believed to be the right and the wrong ways in which a great leader should meet and master a number of various events and trials. This in itself—this conception of the Hebrews of a national and religious king of men—is an historical element and one of the greatest interest. It is on that I preach; it is there that the true human importance of the tale is to be found; the true lessons for the conduct of life, and the teaching of religion.

The story opens on the hills of Bethlehem, whither the burghers of the town sent their young men to look after the flocks which formed part of their wealth. Among the rest was David the son of Jesse, the youngest of all the sons of Jesse; active, of great strength and skill of his hands, a close slinger, inured to storms, exceedingly eager-hearted, goodly to look on, of a beautiful countenance, and his auburn hair streaming on his shoulders; with his shepherd's bag slung round his neck, his staff in his hand, his sling at his side, and his rude harp, on which he played when he rested as night fell. Day after day, night after night, the young man lived alone in the silence of the moors, and what

thoughts came into his life, and of what kind they were, we may learn from the first books of the *Prelude* of Wordsworth. The poet's nature is the same all over the world. Nature speaks to him the same language; similar chords are struck within him. Nor is the comparison to Wordsworth so fantastic as it seems. For the modern poet rose out of as simple and patriarchal a life as David, and received very much the same kind of education, and had indeed—so far as the poetic spirit is concerned—the same elements in his heart. Moreover, from without, the same elements beat like waves upon his spirit. We see clearly, from those passages which deal with Nature, in the Psalms and the Prophetic books, that the Hebrews were open to the solemn impulses of Nature and close observers of her doings. The day and the weather changes brought David their tidings, authentic tidings of invisible things. He saw the sun rejoice as a giant when he rose to run his course. He heard the voice of the Lord shake the wilderness, and saw the lightning of God discover the thick bushes of the grove. He watched the river swell in the tempest, and the mighty clouds fold their curtains together for the pavilion of Jehovah. And at night, when darkness revealed a thousand thousand worlds that day had hidden, in his heart he cried: "The heavens declare the glory

*DAVID, THE SHEPHERD*

of God, and the firmament showeth His handiwork. Day unto day uttereth speech, and night unto night showeth knowledge. There is no speech nor language where their voice is not heard." Whether he wrote the nineteenth Psalm matters not; these were his thoughts and emotions concerning the worlds of man and nature which, sharing in a primæval simplicity and in solemn trustfulness, would make him a silent poet. But to be silent was not David's lot. Not one in fifty thousand shepherds has that power of shaping and voicing thought, or that other power of musical rendering of it, which makes a poet. But David had that divine power. The shepherd became the singer, and sent his work down from age to age, to awake, impel, and move the heart of man.

He was born to be king of his people. But his greater birth was his birth as the sweet singer of Israel. And both were, in our belief, the direct work of God. The coming of that which we call genius on the earth is what we call Election — the choice of certain men to do work, which, being done at a special time in history, gives a new impulse to mankind. They may come in science, in art, in literature, in law, and government; but those we chiefly think of now (because we are considering David) are the men who, having not only power to lead a nation, have power also, from the imaginative and

spiritual in them, to move the whole heart of humanity — men who concentrate into themselves the past, embody in themselves the present, and represent, as an ideal, the coming glory of the future; men who see into the good of humanity and bring it forth, who make love the root of life, and faith its support, and whose hope rides in triumph, like a great ship, over the troubled and stormy waters of humanity. Such men are powers by which the progress of men is worked. God sends them when the times are ripe; they are elected to a special work.

That is the truth underneath the foolish and immoral doctrine of Election which says that God chooses some to be saved and some to be lost. There is no partial choice in salvation. God has elected all men for salvation and for eternal righteousness, and they will at last attain these ends. But it is otherwise, as experience tells us, in the case of genius. All men are not, like David, chosen to be one of the illuminators of the human race; one of the great poets of the world. David has led the voice of the prayer and praise of men for more than two thousand years. Under his name, so great was his poetic fame, the whole book of Psalms, written at many various periods, was collected; and more of it seems to me to be his work than modern criticism now allows. But how much or how little



we have of him does not matter. The vast tradition of his poetry selects him as great among the greatest; and it is well, as I have done, to stay and mark how his life with his sheep and his early companionship with nature ministered to his poetic genius.

Such was a poet's training, and I wish we had more of it in our over-reading world, and in our over-wrought education. As long as culture is made wholly to consist of the knowledge of what other men have thought and written, there is but little chance of the quick growth among us of that original thought which is the real impulse of the world and the real help of men; or of that vigorous and clear personality being formed in men, which sends fresh blood into the veins of humanity. What we want more of in education is to let God and Nature play upon the virgin soil of the heart; to keep what Wordsworth called a wise passiveness for at least half of our early life; to take to heart the meaning of his lines:—

“Think you 'mid all this mighty sum  
Of things together speaking,  
That nothing of itself will come,  
But we must still be seeking?”

To know nothing but books, as to know nothing but day, hides from us worlds of thought, impulse,

power, and creation; and our city life is the ruin of half the imaginative powers of England. And when we are thus stripped of force and passion, it is easy of course to fall into that position which is the fruitful cause of the decay of the imagination — that knowledge and the reasoning power are the greatest things for the culture, and in the life, of a people.

It cannot, on the contrary, be too strongly said that the decay or the sterilising of the imaginative power, and the decay of that passionate feeling for Nature and humanity which is irresistibly forced to create for itself, and which repels the tyranny of knowledge while it accepts its services — is not only the slow consumer of genius in a people, but also the deadly foe of the greatness of a people in every branch of its action, especially in its social and political work. Government without the power of feeling the emotions of the people, without the power of imagining their condition under the laws, without the rule of love and pity; government by statistics, government which is based on intellectual conclusions only, which acts first from what it calls laws and then from what it calls pity — first enfeebles, then destroys the State. And society which directs its life by knowledge without passion, by thought without impulse; which cherishes science unmodi-

fied in its action by human emotion, and education without passionate ideals, and learning without the poetic elements, and training for material success while the ideal and spiritual aims and reverence are neglected; all, in fact, towards which modern society is tending and by which a great part of it is overridden — is a society which is passing, full of self-conceit, into an age of ugliness, decay, and death.

It seems strange to link this on to David, but it follows straight enough from his history. It is not too much to say that a great deal of his power of leading men and forming a dishevelled set of tribes into a nation, of organising a people into a whole, of his command over souls, and of his vast influence, even to the present day, upon humanity, was due to the solitary, passionate, and receptive hours which he passed in the silence of nature, and under the pressure of God, upon the sheep-fed hills of Bethlehem.

The sheep-fed hills! The phrase brings another element in his education before us. Everything teaches a man with the gift of genius; but if he has afterwards to rule men, it is no ill training for him to be such a shepherd as the fells of Cumberland or the plains of the East demand. He will learn how to love animals, and it is a step towards loving man. The sheep are weak and frightened, easily led astray.

He must learn how to fill them with confidence, how to make them trust and obey him. He must get them to move and act together, know each of them and make each of them know him, guide and govern them. He will have to organise their food, to guard them against sudden want and sudden dangers, to care for their rest, to defend them against cruel power, to take care of the ewes great with young, to carry the lambs in his bosom, to seek and save the lost. There is scarcely a quality or necessity of character for a chief of men which may not be learned by a shepherd, if he have the genius to know what he is doing. And the Psalmist who sang of David felt that truth when he cried: "And He chose David also His servant, and took him from the sheepfolds: from following the ewes great with young He brought him to feed Jacob His people, and Israel His inheritance." So felt also that other Psalmist, who I would fain think was David himself, who compared the God of Israel in His love and care of His people to the Shepherd who led them to still pastures and by sweet waters, and through the valley of the shadow of death. So felt the prophets when they spoke of the perfect King: "He shall feed His flock like a shepherd. He shall gather the lambs in His arms and carry them in His bosom." "I will feed my flock of Israel,

*DAVID, THE SHEPHERD*

and will seek that which is lost and bring again that which was driven away, and bind up that which was broken, and will strengthen that which was sick. . . . And I will set up one shepherd over them, and he shall feed them, even my servant David." And so thought Jesus also, who by love was King of men, when He spoke His tenderest parable of the Saviour of the lost. No one who thinks of David's success as king can afford to forget that early shepherd education.

Nor should we forget it. Many of us make little of the means of self-education, of a very noble kind, which are placed in our hands if we do our duty to the animals we live with, if we love them, watch lest they be injured, care for their comfort, guard them with tenderness; and, since they do so much work for us, be grateful for that work and resent as a baseness any wrong to them. I look upon any injury done to man's natural or developed tenderness to animals as an injury done to the whole State, as a degradation to humanity, as a grave wrong to morals, and a worse wrong to the ideal of gentleness and courtesy which is at the root of so much of national honour. We sacrifice animals for our food; it is, I suppose, a necessity. But the animal is swiftly slain, and it ought to be a part of civilisation to do this work in a kindly, unrevolting, and un-

cruel manner. I see no evil in that, any more than I do in a quick death for man when his time has come. There are also multitudes of animals whom we must put an end to, lest man and the works of man should be wholly eaten up; but we are bound to do this in an expeditious way without causing needless suffering.

But there are numbers of animals who are our workers and our companions, whom we do not eat, and whom we use up for our work. It is too much our habit to treat them as if they had no feeling, as if no thought were to be given to their suffering, as if no gratitude were due to them. The pains inflicted on the kindly races who labour for us, and who would love us well, are pitiable; and they lower, when they prevail in a people, the whole spiritual temper of the nation. But what can we as yet expect when we work our poor, our own kind, the men and women and children whom we hire, worse even than our horses, feed them worse and house them worse, pity them and honour them less? How much of that want of mercy and gentleness to men comes out of our careless cruelty to animals I do not know, but as long as we make sport out of the misery of wild creatures, and as long as the torture of animals is excused for the sake of knowledge, and the art of healing men is made to rest

on the deliberately administered agony of creatures whose weakness we are bound in honour to protect—it is no wonder that pitifulness, and sensitiveness to suffering and to justice are so lessened that we have no real care for the hideous pains which society, for the sake of its own luxury, comfort, and amusement, permits, without thought, to be inflicted on the poor. There is nothing in the whole range of things needful for the greatness or the culture of a nation more necessary than the habit of pity, than the daily practice of it; and everything which enfeebles that habit not only separates the nation from sweetness and light, but is a vital danger to the life of the State. Much has been done of late with regard to animals; but the more we have done, the more vividly ought we to see the enormous evil which still remains; the more we ought to contend against all cruelty to animals from whatever quarter it comes, and whatever excuses are made for it, from the side of our amusements, our sport, our luxury, or our science.

Moreover, to gain the opposite habit, to live with our animals as the Oriental and Highland shepherd lives with his sheep, contains in it so many lessons for life, that to gain that habit for our children ought to be a part of every education; not only of the individual for the sake of his own character,

but of the citizen for the sake of the character of his nation. It will teach us to wisely manage, to lead, and govern men, if we are born for that. It will teach us to carry the principles of pity, of help to the weak, of gratitude for service, of saving the lost, into our dealings with the flock of men and women and children, who are as weak and troubled as sheep and as easily led astray; and for that business we are born, nay, to that business God has dedicated us. We are to be shepherds of the sheep. David gained that habit, and its power upon him is shown at the hour of his darkest sin and led him to his bitterest repentance. It was when Nathan the prophet had likened his conduct to Uriah to that of a rich man who took a lamb that he loved from a poor man, that his heart was broken into dreadful penitence. His shepherd life came back to him. "The man shall die," David said; "he had no pity." "Thou art the man," said Nathan.



## II

### THE COURAGE OF DAVID

*"And David said to Saul, Thy servant kept his father's sheep, and there came a lion and a bear, and took a lamb out of the flock; and I went out after him, and smote him, and delivered it out of his mouth: and when he arose against me, I caught him by his beard, and smote him and slew him. Thy servant slew both the lion and the bear; and this uncircumcised Philistine shall be as one of them, seeing he has defied the armies of the living God. David said moreover, The Lord that delivered me out of the paw of the lion and out of the paw of the bear, he will deliver me out of the hand of this Philistine."*

I SAMUEL xvii. 34-37.

THIS passage embodies two of the stories which collected round the youth of David — the story of his conquest of the wild beasts which attacked his flock, and the story of his conquest of the giant Philistine who attacked the armies of his countrymen, or, as David is made to call them, the armies of the living God. The tales are the first record of the courage of David, of his qualities as

a war-leader, of the chivalrous faith and boldness which placed him at the head of Israel. They may have no historical value, but they have all the quality of romantic poetry, and they embody truth which concerns human life at all times, and especially regarding the virtue of courage. They reveal its foundations and its edification in the soul.

The shepherd life in those early days was a dangerous life. Fierce thunder-storms flew up the sky, and the lightning struck the sheep. Fiercer rain came at times and swelled the streams to flood, and drowned the beasts, and put the shepherd's life in jeopardy. The wolves hung round the fold at night, and had to be driven away at the peril of his life. By day as well as by night greater beasts attacked the feeding flock, and we have this story of David fighting for his sheep with the lion and the bear, and slaying them both. He was always on the watch, and his courage was high. It never failed him in a long life during which there was incessant need of every form of courage, of mere physical bravery, of fortitude, of quick choice of plan where quickness and dash were everything, of audacity in forlorn hopes, of long endurance of trouble, of coolness and presence of mind in desperate circumstance, of the power to see facts as they were and to meet them, and finally of the

## *THE COURAGE OF DAVID*

power to face his own guilt and to repent of it. Well, he gained this great habit of courage during his shepherd life. When he first comes forth into public life he is already celebrated for his brave deeds, already known to the women of Judah.

He gained, I say, the habit of courage, and in most cases courage is a habit. There are but few who are born without any feeling of that nerve-excitement which we call fear; and they are not the better, but the worse, leaders of men, either in battle or other dangers, on account of that. They are unable to guard their men against a danger they do not realise, and they have not enough sympathy with the natural trouble of their untrained men. The men who are best as leaders are men who have known the sensation of fear, but who have not yielded to it, who have entirely conquered it. Then they can feel with others; they have a careful prudence, a forethought, and presence of mind in danger, which is one of the parts of courage. They have foreseen also the fear which their men will have and they nurse them into bravery. Habit makes them fearless, and habit in time makes their men fearless. But the fearlessness is often only great in their own business. The soldier, the sailor, the doctor in a plague, amaze outsiders, but if we were to put any one of them in the place of any

other the new and unknown danger might trouble them strangely. Imagination unsettles their nerve; they lose presence of mind; they may do the work, but it is ill done. I have known men absolutely fearless in one danger who were almost overwhelmed by a different kind of danger. I have met a man who thought nothing of charging amid a rain of bullets who did not dare to visit a patient in small-pox. I once saw a man who had proved his courage again and again on shore grow as white as a sheet in an open boat when a heavy wave half filled it. The courage was the courage of habit, and the fear was the fear engendered by want of habit. Therefore, one who cares to have a courage above proof ought to practise himself in all kinds of danger.

All this, however, points to something deeper as the true foundation of human courage. The sources of the courage which in the mass of men will stand all kinds of danger, are not to be found only in physical, but much more in moral and spiritual training. Courage is of the first importance for life. It is well to get it well into our being; and one of the first things to do, in order to have it at all times and in all trials, is to get rid of the notion that it is only a physical quality, and to understand that it can be won by the will when the will towards it is directed by noble motives in accord-

## *THE COURAGE OF DAVID*

ance with the claims on us of Right and Love. There are sure to be hours in life when the whole success of all whom we lead — it matters little whether we only lead our own household or a whole army — rests on our facing danger boldly. We must accustom ourselves to realise that; and then the importance of our courage to others must so dwell upon our mind that, when the hour of danger comes, we shall be able, from the force of the high motive of our courage being the salvation of others, to master our trembling nerves, if we are of that temperament; to divide as it were our soul from our body; and to conquer the nervous thrill of the body by the high passion of the soul. You remember the story told of Henri IV. ; it is a good illustration. He was naturally afraid in danger, and when he first went into battle at the siege of Cahors, his body shook all over with fear. Then he was heard to say: "Vile carcass! thou tremblest. But thou wouldst tremble ten times more, if thou knewest where I am going to take thee." And he rushed forward twenty yards ahead of his men, and his axe was the first to strike the gates. Lift the soul above the body; it is the secret of courage. The two stories of David give us two other illustrations. When the lion sprang upon the sheep and he was alone, a stripling against the great beast,

he might have feared and fled. But pity and love filled his heart, and the sense of duty. He was put there to protect and save; and he forgot to be afraid. The rush of these fine passions killed the thought of personal danger. What mattered what happened to him, provided pity and duty were kept unstained. And he ran to meet the beasts. So should it be with us. Let the masters of our being be love, pity, and the doing of duty; let these, by daily training, be the first in us; and they will spring to the front with such an impulse in all trial, that we shall not even know fear. In their rush the danger will be over, and overcome, almost before we are aware of it.

Look at the same thing in the second story, that of the giant of Gath. David was one of those who had the honour of his country at his heart. That noble passion, which so greatly exalts the heart and purifies the life by reverence and admiration, which has so much of ideality and variety in it, was cherished by David, and rose, at a touch, into intensity. In that intensity all fear vanished. The indignation with which his heart swelled for his country and his God sent him forth against the great brute before whom the whole army of Israel trembled, and sent him forth to victory. Therefore, let us win noble passions, ideal aims, deep reverences,

## THE COURAGE OF DAVID

beyond ourselves: and in the hour when they are attacked, and we have to defend them at the risk of health, or pain, or life, the danger will not touch the soul; fear will have no existence; we shall fly to the battle with carelessness and joy.

The same principle is applicable to much smaller matters in life than the defence, without fear, of one's country, or one's cause. There are a number of fears which belong to a nervous or imaginative temperament, and which have a very troublous influence on common, daily life. There are persons who are almost victims, as if they were children, of the nameless dreads of the supernatural or of the unknown, or who, building up in fancy the misfortunes of the future, suffer the terrors of that which may never happen. There are others who have real torment about their health. They receive a shock, and they watch themselves from that time forth, so that the slightest change in their body causes them to lose the use of life. They keep their hand, as it were, always upon their pulse, and if it beat strangely, disease or death rises before them; they lie awake in dread at night; the shadow of their fear lies on all their work; their power to love is spoiled or destroyed. This is a pitiable business. There are thousands of lives ruined in this fashion by secret fears. The very springs of

action are finally broken; efforts are shrunk from, or not made, which men and women are bound to make. When most is dependent on them, when their friends most want them, all of a sudden, for no reason, they retire. Or at the moment of action some trivial play of fancy or superstition holds them back. When they ought to be most free and alert and joyous, the fear of ill-health or death depresses them into self-slavery, into sloth, into querulous melancholy.

None of us should allow ourselves or our children to be self-victimised in this fashion. Parents should gather round their children's hearts motives beyond themselves which will have power to place their fears in the second rank, and, finally, to overcome them. Ridicule or punishment for the nervous fears of children is wicked and foolish, because it only doubles their fears. That for which parents should try, is to free their children altogether from this curse. And the first thing they have to do is to treat all fears as having a real existence to children, to be gentle with their terrors, to even sympathise with the pain they cause; and then to meet them with an appeal to the soul and to the affections of the child — to motives beyond himself — to honour, or faith, or sacrifice, or love — and the special motive chosen will depend on the nature of



## *THE COURAGE OF DAVID*

the child. As to ourselves — the same rule applies. We must get motives for losing fear beyond ourselves. Our slavery to any dread is most frequently caused by thinking that our health, our prosperity, our life are the most important matters. But the most important matters are not these, but the health, the help, the peace, the life of others than ourselves. And if we could grasp that truth, and the impulse it brings, we shall cease to think of our own health or life, or rather, we should lose the thought of these things in the desire to save others from fear and shame. Secret dreads are to be conquered, not for our own sake, but for the sake of the work we are bound to do for man, and which these dreads disable us from doing. There is the lofty motive: "I must live beyond fear of all things, that I may save men as Christ saved them. My temperament is nervous, excitable, prone to fears; I will steadily train the will to overcome that weakness. Else I cannot do all I ought to do for God and man."

If we want to conquer fear, let us seize this truth — courage lies in the predominance of the high powers of the soul; in the pre-eminence of the love of others. What mother ever feared death when her child was in danger? Even in the animals this is true; and in the pre-eminence in our soul of the

imperative of duty, in the deep resolve that whatever becomes of us, justice and truth and honour shall remain in our hands unstained; in the determination of the will never to be false to love—to the love of God and the love of man—the death of all fear is contained and finally secured.

If, then, David had not habituated himself to courage; if through fear he had failed to protect his sheep; if his imaginative quality had made him dread the unknown; and if, dreading it, he had not conquered that dread; if love and pity for his sheep had not made him meet the lion with a passion which forgot his danger; if reverence and love of his country and her God had not been stronger in his stripling heart than terror of the Philistine; if the soul in him had not been master of the nerves—where would have been his career? What could he have won for his people? What name would he have sent down to posterity? His whole use, his whole success, depended on his gaining the habit of courage. Our use in life, our sacrifice, our influence depend also on that. We are bound to work for courage at every point with all our might; and there are none, however fearful by nature, who may not win it. It is a matter of habit, and the habit of it depends on the development of the unselfish powers of the soul.

## *THE COURAGE OF DAVID*

Lastly, I have kept the most important of all the grounds and supports of courage to the end. It is made by all the writers of David's story — even by those who took up that story as late as the eighth century before Christ — to be at the basis of his courage. This foundation is trust in God as his King and Friend. His life or death, he held, were in the hand of God, and what happened to him was in a divine will which would do what was right. All he had himself to do — and this conviction saved his thought from mere fatalism — was to follow what seemed to him right, to listen to and obey the voice of Jehovah within him. In that faith he ran against the lion, in that faith he took his sling against the giant. "If I am right, I shall prevail; if I am wrong, I shall find it out. If I die, it is His will who is righteousness. Let God do His will, and I will do what I think His will to be, if a thousand deaths stand in my way."

Yes, want of this trust in God, unbelief in a love and righteousness directing the world, is the unknown source of more than half our fears. But trust in God, trust in an all-good and loving will, moving us and the whole world towards perfect work, is the source of the highest courage of which man is capable. With that conviction, what becomes

of our superstitious, nameless dreads? The night is as bright as the day, the prison is a paradise, our battle is delight. Dangers from the forces of nature, from disease; dangers in the midst of war, on the seas, in hours when we are lost and alone, have no force to subdue our will, or lower our effort, or lead us to shame, for they are in the will of God for us; and if we are smitten by them, our spirit which is our real self, will not be divided from Him, and that is all we need care about. Death has no terror for one who knows that he and his Father are one. The man who can truly say, "I believe in God, the Father Almighty," is master of all fears, for he knows that God is love.

And when we have faith in God, we have faith in ourselves, and when we have both these faiths, we have also faith in the rightness of our cause; and faith in ourselves is another ground of physical courage, and faith in our cause being right is another ground of moral courage. But all the minor faiths of life run up into the mightiest, into faith in God. That is the most victorious power in the whole world. No fear can breathe or tremble in its atmosphere. Well did David know it, and well did a greater than David know it! Our master Jesus realised it in a life which never faltered, in

*THE COURAGE OF DAVID*

a death which has been the inspiration of fearlessness. "Why are ye fearful, O ye of little faith," He cried, when the storm broke on Galilee. In that brief word, the cause and the conquest of fear are both contained.



### III

## THE CONSECRATION OF DAVID

*“And Samuel said to Jesse, Are here all thy children? And he said, There remaineth yet the youngest, and, behold, he keepeth the sheep. And Samuel said to Jesse, Send and fetch him; for we will not sit down until he come hither. And he sent and brought him in. Now he was ruddy, and withal of a beautiful countenance, and goodly to look to. And the Lord said: Arise, anoint him: for this is he. Then Samuel took the horn of oil and anointed him in the midst of his brethren: and the Spirit of the Lord came on David from that day forward.”*

I SAMUEL xvi. 11-23.

THE life of David among his sheep would appear but commonplace to the burghers of Bethlehem, but when there is genius in a youth, nothing is common. All things speak to it, teach it, exalt it; and its breath blows upon what seems common and makes it exceeding fair. It is not too much to say that there is nothing more divine on earth than Youth which loves so much all things beyond itself, that it habitually lives in grandeur

and beauty. It were well, perhaps, for David's happiness had he then died, before the fierce world had seized upon his life; but it would not have been well for the world of men; and it is duty done, and battling with trouble, and forging experience out of fire and blows, for the love of man, that we need from men. If they give us that, however they suffer, they have done well. We love David, the sinful, sorrowful veteran, worn with the blows of life, more than David the youth whose every breath was love and purity and joy. It was Paradise in which he lived. But Paradise does not last. We are driven forth among thorns and thistles to till the ground of our life, in sweat and sorrow, that we may make a harvest whose corn men may eat when we are gone. But before we are driven forth into stern reality, some event from outside, or some inward prediction of duty, or some impassioned feeling such as befell Wordsworth on the morning when he felt himself a consecrated spirit, sets us apart from the ancient life of youth, and leads us forward in thought upon the life of manhood. We know that we are called, and that the Master of Life is the Caller. But then, there is a pause, a time of quiet, in which we vaguely feel what is coming, predict its duties, realise perhaps its temptations, and gather our powers together for action.



## *THE CONSECRATION OF DAVID*

Such an event and such a result now entered into David's life; at least, so runs the story.

One day Samuel drew near to Bethlehem, and the elders, who knew how stern a judge he was, and how often slaughter followed on his coming — for we are still in the fierce and savage times of Israel — came out to meet him with terror. "Comest thou in peace?" they cried. "In peace," he answered, "to offer a sacrifice to Jehovah." Then follows the story of this chapter. The tale was probably invented afterwards to supply a supernatural beginning to the fame and life of David. But it is the image of the crisis between youth and manhood of which I have spoken, and the humanity of the tale is astonishing. Its details are nothing, its spirit is everything; and it is full of interest and of teaching for us.

At the sacrifice Samuel drew David aside and anointed him as the future king. But I do not think that the writer of the tale intends us to understand that Samuel told David that he was to be king. The whole of the after-story loses all probability and is even revolting (a thing a good inventor would not have allowed himself to do) if David is to be understood to be aware of the intention of Samuel. He only knew that the great prophet had singled him out for some important purpose, had dedicated him

for a leader. The writer meant us to understand that David went back to his sheep not knowing he should be king after Saul.

He went back, then, with nothing more in his mind than that the prophet had chosen him for a great work which would fall, in due time, into his hands. God had selected him to do great deeds for Israel. He had already dreamt of these. Now his dreams, the prophetic aspirations of genius, were confirmed from without. A certain shape and solidity had been given them. He was a consecrated spirit; isolated from others; and yet, nearer to others, because the purpose of the isolation was for the good and glory of his country, not for himself. We see that was his thought, because, excited as he must have been, he returned quietly, in humility and with trust in God's leading, to his lowly daily work. Again he watched his sheep; again, stretched on the hillside beneath the stars, he thought and dreamed before he slept. Yet how changed he was! The step had been made which carried him out of the fields of boyhood to the threshold of the temple of Humanity. He saw its gates open, and a vast crowd moving within, and among them he was to live and act. He realised something of the vastness of mankind; and he realised his own individual life as he had never done

## *THE CONSECRATION OF DAVID*

before; and then in this double realisation, he realised God, not as a vague impression from without, but as an actual presence in his soul.

Yes, it was a mighty change, and only David and God knew it. But how does the tale speak to us? How is it reflected in our lives? That is the question; and when we have answered it, we shall understand the heart of David, and in that understanding, comprehend our own.

All are not chosen for great deeds, as David was, but all are chosen for some special work. It is my conviction that every soul is given life with the intention that he should show forth in it some phase of the life of God, and do some part of that vast work which will finally close in the completed glory of the human race. Many who are born into this world cannot do that work here, weighted as they are by the sins of others, by the evils of social life, by hereditary disease and crime. But beyond this world these will find their place and work. They have been victims, they will be victors.

Those, then, with this belief, we may lay aside. But there are many of us who have our life in our own hands, whom God has placed where our will for right and love can operate. We are chosen to reveal in our life some one phase of the infinity of God's beauty, truth, love, or justice; to seize some

idea of these, and to work it out for the sake of man; to manifest God in our inward and outward being. On every one of us is laid this weight of duty. At first the feeling of it is vague; it seems to come in dreams. We are only conscious of a pull from without upon us, which calls us to labour for others, but we cannot tell whence it comes nor whither it is leading us. This is the first visionary consciousness of our election; but though it seems like a vision, its power, its attractiveness, its far-off call never quite abandon us. We hear it in the silences; the night is full of it. Nature seems to speak it. God is calling His child. "Find out," He cries, "the work I have given you to do. Believe that I have called you." Then we are like David among the sheepfolds. There is a time of passiveness, of confusion, uncertainty. No opening has come into which we may as yet carry our energy. No voice from without shapes as yet before us the aspirations of our heart, or confirms our hope that we have a work to do for man.

Then it is our duty to be content and wait; to do, like David, steadily what lies before us, though it seem the veriest commonplace. Then we are called upon to tend the flock given into our hands, to fulfil to the last jot and tittle the daily labour, and to believe that, in its doing, God is educating us,

## *THE CONSECRATION OF DAVID*

teaching and preparing us for the work of life. If we are steady in that, and in our faith, then the time will come when from without a new event will break into our life, confirm our hopes, give shape to our aspiration; until, at last, the idea of what we are born to do will dawn upon us and irradiate our sky. We are anointed in that hour to be king over ourselves, over our transient desires, our appetites, our bare ambitions, and over all allurements from the world to be false to God and man. We are anointed, as David was, to do a work for our country, for our society; to sacrifice ourselves, in labour, for the race to which we belong. As yet we do not see how to do it, but we are sure that, if we keep our eyes open, the path will be disclosed in which we have to walk. The idea is enough for us at present. Let us become accustomed to it, live inwardly in it, honour and cherish it, swear to be faithful to it for life and death.

Alas, this wearies some of us. It takes us away from pleasures, it bids us curb our passions, it overwhelms us with a weight of duty to others which interferes with our desire to live for ourselves. Then we throw it away, trample on the pearls like swine, and, losing for a long time our souls, find only the woeful world of self. But we are not left alone by our Father. It is not very long before

## *THE OLD TESTAMENT AND MODERN LIFE*

that which once came as a call returns as a chastisement; and in misery of loneliness within, in self-horror, sometimes in desperate rebellion, and finally in agony of repentance, we are forced to take up the work we cast aside — forced, if not here, then in the world to come. Whatever we suffer, God's pertinacity will not let us go. We must do our duty at last.

But if, accepting the call, we say, "I am chosen; I will do, God helping me, that for which I was chosen; I will nourish the thought of it within, till the day disclose how I shall shape it in work" — then, all our life is changed. We go back, as yet, to our daily toil; but it is with a new uplifting impulse which transfigures the commonplace. The thought that God has dedicated us burns and glows within us. Our soul lives on the idea as the body on bread; and every day grows stronger, fitter for the coming work. The present is much, the future is more; and half the dignity of man, half the glory of the soul, consists in living for the future in the present.

This then was the mighty spiritual power which David possessed, and which possessed him. It is ours as much as his, if we care to have it. And when we have it, it works many good things in the youthful heart. First, it steadies life. Drifting

## *THE CONSECRATION OF DAVID*

and dreaming, while the soul is, like the dove of Noah, searching over the deep waters of life where to rest, is well enough for a time. But we cannot dream and drift all our days; and we cease to dream when we believe that God has chosen us for a work special to our hand. We may not yet see the path on which we are to go: but we know there is a path which will be shown to us. And the knowledge steadies us. We have to prepare for the race or the battle; to harmonise the inward powers; to knit them into strength; to accustom them to work and to the shaping of thought — so that when the path does open, and the call comes, we and all within us may be like well-trained racers waiting eagerly for the summons. Life becomes graver, though not less happy; and the gravity of what lies before us does not allow us to drift any more, like an oarless boat upon mid-ocean. And our dreams! What is noble in them we do not abandon. We shape it into clear thought. “I will get the vagueness out of the matter,” we say; “and when the thing is shaped, if it be worth anything, I’ll get it into act; I must work the works of Him that sent me, while it is day.” Yes; steadiness, self-education, these come out of such a faith.

Secondly, to have such an idea within us, to live by its ambrosial food in the present, fills us with

that imaginative passion of the future, which, when it is employed on things to be done for love of man and God, most ennobles the soul in its pursuit of good. Losing ourselves in constantly forming and re-forming plans and acts which may help and save our fellows, we are freed from thinking of ourselves; and into our self-delivered heart, now ready to receive, the whole full tide of God and of Man is poured. God lives in us because we are not living in ourselves. Our soul is peopled with humanity. We do not know one moment of loneliness. All our thoughts are carried outside of ourselves: for the idea, whose forms we imagine, is in God and Man and Nature, and in us, because we are in them and not in ourselves. Then, also, that part of the power of the present which tends to enslave a man has no dominion over us, because our highest interest on earth is in the future of mankind. Our work is to minister to the progress of humanity into union with God. The present then is of value, not for itself (in which lies its tyranny), but for the sake of the future, in which lie its glory, its impulse, and its use.

Moreover, in a soul so filled and so employed, there is no room for that idleness of the spirit which flings open all the doors of the soul to evil thoughts. We are kept pure; and we are kept apart from the



## *THE CONSECRATION OF DAVID*

world. Should we give way for a time to impure thought; if we are led away by the pride of life and the lust of the eye and the greed of wealth—we feel the nobleness of the idea paling within us or we dread to lose it altogether. “God keep me from all wrong and folly,” we cry. “What if I should be unfit when the time comes to fulfil my Master’s thought for me, to do His work!” Yes, the faith that we are chosen by God to reveal a part of Himself to the world, and to labour in that, for the sake of our fellow men, keeps us unworldly, keeps us pure. There is nothing which has greater power over the life of youth and manhood.

Lastly, we see for ourselves that such a faith does for the young the greatest thing that can be done for life: it links us fast to God, it links us fast to Man. The two most glorious beings in the universe, whom if we felt and loved with all our heart, we should never think of ourselves—God and Man—are the masters, the lovers of our soul: Man for whom we live, God in whom Man lives and breathes, and in whom, finally, he shall be perfect. In these two immensities, one of which is contained in the other, our little existence, which yet is infinite, is bound up. To feel that truth is to glorify every moment of our being. It was the truth which Jesus, our Master, felt, and it made His sorrowful

life at root a joyful one. It irradiated with celestial light every step of the thorny path to the cross. The whole heaven and earth on which His dying eyes looked shone glorious in its summer radiance, as He gave up the ghost.

Great then is the power of a divine thought in the soul, the thought that we are chosen to manifest God and to work for man — great not only for youth, but for all life. By it unity is given to life. The glory that shone around our youth before we entered into work is the same glory which shines around our dying hour.

ELIJAH



# I

## ELIJAH ON CARMEL

*“ And Elijah came unto all the people and said, How long halt ye between two opinions? If the Lord be God, follow him: but if Baal, then follow him. And the people answered him not a word.”*

I KINGS xviii. 21.

ELIJAH is as much an historical personage as Ahab. He truly lived and worked; and he embodied the strife between Jehovah and Baal. But as time went on, and the majesty, force, and wildness of his character seized on the imagination of the Jewish people, legend and miracle collected round his figure, and the historical elements are sometimes hidden by the embroidery. But this is clear — that we have in this story of Elijah the record of the actual struggle which went on in Israel for at least fifty years between monotheism and idolatry, between puritanism and immorality, between the individual conscience and a despotism, between nationalism and foreign influences.

Politically, socially, morally, and religiously Elijah represented and concentrated this struggle, and we see it here, in the book of Kings, drawn for us in the form in which men a generation or two later than the events looked back upon it.

Criticism has, however, extended its doubts too far. There is no reason for disbelieving the whole of the story of the meeting between the prophets of Baal and Elijah on Mount Carmel, though we must reject certain portions of that story. The main elements of the tale are quite in character with other Eastern stories. Nor is there any reason to doubt that Eljiah, suddenly dashed with despondency, and his life in danger, fled across Judah to Horeb; a journey he could easily accomplish in the twelfth part of forty days, and saw the vision recorded in the text. It is a vision such as Mohammed might have had. There is nothing unreal about it. It is in his character, and the scenery of it belongs to the desert mountains. The prophet's own soul, inspired by the God within him, shaped it in his imagination.

The two great pictures of him which we possess in the eighteenth and nineteenth chapters of the first Book of Kings are bound up with two historic mountains, the Mount of Carmel and of Horeb, and Elijah appears upon them in two phases, sharply

## *ELIJAH ON CARMEL*

contrasted, of his character. He stands on Horeb alone, without faith in God or in himself, lost in depression; he stands on the Mount of Carmel, encompassed by all the people of Israel, thrilled and burning with faith in God, and in an hour of exultation. It is a great contrast, but it is in the character of the man. Temperament, outward circumstances, impulse, the sense of his own activity, had too much power over him. His soul was not the absolute master of his life. Great then, but not of the greatest; powerful one day, powerless another; unequal; losing self in noble passion, but with a self which had to be lost, and which, when the passion was over, was found again. This was the mingled character, weak and strong by turns. The weaker man we shall see on Horeb, and compare with a truly strong man. The stronger man in Elijah is now our subject.

We see him stand here, in his full strength, on Carmel, at a great crisis in the fate of Israel. To that crisis he was equal; nay, in it he stood the first. By might of character he was then the monarch of all Israel; by the same might he swept into agreement with himself all the wavering, all the indifferent, all the worldly-minded. Against him stood the court, the weak king, the cruel and masculine queen, the whole body of the priesthood

## *THE OLD TESTAMENT AND MODERN LIFE*

of the Baal, the whole of the foreign and idolatrous tribe that had invaded the religion of Jehovah. That religion was often fierce and ruthless, but it was not foul. It held to two great principles of the deepest importance for the progress of the world. It held to the unity of God, and it held to justice and purity as the necessities for His worship. Both these principles were traversed by the worship of Baal and Astarte. On one side, then, was the crowd and the court, on the other only one man. But lonely as he was, so great was his thought, and so grand his character, that Ahab trembled in his palace when he thought upon Elijah, and Jezebel heard at night his voice, crying aloud her doom.

At last, driven by the drought and famine, these two forces met; and Elijah chose the place of meeting on Mount Carmel, not far from Jezreel, where, on the plain below, the River Kishon flowed; and where, among the palms, the palace of Ahab and the temple of Baal gleamed in the pitiless light. To that place he summoned the priests of the idolatry to decide the God whom Israel should worship. It was a stage worthy of this great drama, a grassy stage like that of the times of old. There was still a green plain left high up on Carmel, close beneath the Rock of Sacrifice, that crowned the eastern sum-



## *ELIJAH ON CARMEL*

mit of the mountain. The grass was cool, still wet with the morning dews; and here at least green, for it was washed by the fountain source whose waters the longest drought cannot exhaust. The crowd of the people stood among flowers; they saw the blue Mediterranean sparkle in the distance and to the east, inland, over groves and glades of wood and waving fields the great plain which spread away towards the lake of Galilee. Its verdant expanse, now grey in the withering heat, was marked at other times by the blue and winding ribbon of the torrent of Kishon; but now Elijah saw only its river-bed, a white network of sand and stones, like molten silver in the sun. Below were the walls and gates of Jezreel, whence the people, pouring forth that quiet morn, had climbed the rough paths through the woods of Carmel, till they reached the grassy amphitheatre. There they waited all the day; there the prophets of Baal, four hundred and fifty, in barbaric garments, had built their altar, offered their sacrifice, and from morn till evening called upon their God, leaping and dancing and cutting themselves with knives. Again and again the fruitless scream cleft the sky: "O Baal, hear us." There was no voice nor any that regarded.

And over against them stood Elijah, one man, alone, in proud dignity, the wild prophet of the

wilderness, clad in the rough sheepskin mantle, his dark hair on his shoulders, prayer and passion in his eyes, clothed with wrath and faith, and silent hour after hour; until at last the irony and scorn and fierceness of his soul broke forth, and he mocked the priests — the precursor of many a wild enthusiast whose savage contempt of idolatry was as great as his faith in God, when he was asked to sacrifice to the gods of Rome. "Cry aloud," he shouted while all the people heard and the rocks rang — "Cry aloud, for he is a god; either he is talking, or he is pursuing, or he is in a journey, or peradventure he sleepeth, and must be awaked."

It was the battlefield of two religions, and Elijah concentrated the struggle in the first words that fell from his lips, words marked as much by his stormy contempt as by his religious passion; words that carry their impassioned appeal to us: "How long halt ye between two opinions? If the Lord be God, follow Him, but if Baal, then follow him." And they answered him never a word.

Years ago, I applied the phrase to the great national and world-wide questions which from time to time take form before mankind, and sift the just from the unjust, the followers of the false gods of the world from the followers of the God whose nature is righteousness. Questions of that kind lay before

## *ELIJAH ON CARMEL*

us then; questions of that kind lie before us now; questions of justice, of pity, of the rights and duties of the human race, as against the rights which, made by unjust laws, are injuring mankind. I will not mark them here by name, but the time is coming fast when the great mass of those merely indifferent to these questions; who stand apart in silence like the people of Israel, shutting their ears in wealth or culture, in money-getting, in idleness or vice; men in all classes of society from the top to the bottom, who say: "What are these questions to us? let them go, but let us get on; let us live our own life," will be forced out of their isolated indifference by the cry — perhaps made by some Elijah in a great national crisis; perhaps shaped into voice by some series of events coming to their climax — "How long halt ye between two opinions? Come forth into the battle; show your hand; let us know of what you are made. Choose the side of injustice or justice, of the comfortable or the martyr. Stand clear with those who cling with passion to their own goods, or with those who sacrifice them for the good of their neighbour. Declare for Baal or declare for God." It will not do then to answer never a word. You must answer. The whirlwind of events will suck you in. Take care that you be ready to choose, and to rightly choose; for surer

than the eternal heaven itself is the victory of justice over oppression, of pity over hardheartedness, of truth over the lies which pass for truth in this whited sepulchre which we think a temple, and call society.

And when the day comes, the priests of Baal, those who have worshipped for themselves the false gods of self-aggrandisement and pride, of luxury, sloth and immorality — wherever they are, in the lower or the upper ranges of society — for that worship is a temper of the soul — will cry in vain, in that time of overturning and decision, on their gods; leaping on the altars they have made, crying and cutting themselves in their despair. There will be no voice, nor any that regardeth them.

It is the same in the individual soul. Long days pass by, during which we are indifferent to the rights of the conscience or the calls of the spirit. All we care for are the things which belong to our advance, our wealth or our position. If righteousness or justice or pity interfere with these things, so much the worse for them. We bid them stand aside, or we persuade ourselves that we are right because law is on our side. Or we call only for knowledge, or for beauty; and when a diviner thought or a more ideal emotion breathes upon us from another world, we shake ourselves loose from

## *ELIJAH ON CARMEL*

it. "Let the spiritual sleep," we say. "It spoils the dry light in which we think, it troubles the sensuous beauty in which we take our joy. We do not join with Baal, but keep good friends with him." We listen to Elijah, and smile, and answer him never a word. "Why should we choose, and trouble ourselves? Our path runs between both; we have nothing to do with either God or Baal."

But the hour will come when we shall be forced out of our indifference, when, at some crisis of our life, conscience storms in upon our placid "Let alone," and we are compelled to choose between justice and injustice, between thoughtlessness and loving kindness; when the doing of right or the doing of wrong, and that decidedly, in the face of the world, is demanded of us by events; when, in another sphere, some overwhelming blow suddenly delivered by what we call fate, some desperate trial in which we are left all alone, or some ruin coming on our house of life, forces us to face the great spiritual questions: Whether there be a God who cares for us; or a Saviour who will release us from the weight of sin; or an immortal life in which we shall meet again the love whose loss has beaten us into the depths of desolation.

Then we must answer, then we must take our side. "How long halt ye between two opinions?"

## *THE OLD TESTAMENT AND MODERN LIFE*

rings then like a storm-bell, incessantly clanging in our ears. Conscience will be answered. The spirit rises like Elijah in our heart, demanding that it be satisfied. We look to the false gods of the world, with whom we were such good friends. They are useless in that hour. We look to Elijah, proclaiming the Lord of Righteousness. We have scarcely the heart to join him. Our indifference has been so deep and long, that even in our despair we have no force to choose. Then God in us drives us deeper and deeper, forces and forces our hand, heaps demand upon demand, gives conscience a stronger and a more imperious voice; sorrow and confusion strip us naked. Keener and keener rises in us the wail of the spirit, till we can bear it no longer; till, knowing our weakness, want and sin, we are flung like shipwrecked men upon the shores of God, and, crying, "I am lost; save me, my Father," find our true life at last in union with righteousness and love. But we find it, not in submission to the threatening of Elijah, but in the following of the tenderness of Jesus. It is not the avenging fire of the Lord that falls on our souls, but the dew of the love of God the Father.

Yet, to return to Elijah, and to the scene from which we have wandered, no figure can be more grand than he standing there alone, above the wild

### *ELIJAH ON CARMEL*

dance and crying of the priests of Baal! All the desert majesty is upon his face; all the glory of the great conception of one God, of one righteousness, is shining in his eyes; all the power of that thought, and of being the servant of its law, speaks in his iron attitude, even in his scornful speech—one against the world, and in mortal danger. There are few who have the steady inward power to take and keep that post. It needs courage, not only physical but moral; it needs determined will; it needs intense conviction of the right of that for which the stand is made; it needs to have lived a blameless life. All these things belonged to Elijah, and their power in him made him majestic. Every soul that saw him that day, erect upon the rock, felt the strength and awe of his solitude and solitary faith in God flow like a river from him into their hearts. Every soul felt the baseness, in comparison with his stern manhood, of the court of Ahab; the noble contrast between his life and the luxury of the city, the indifference of the people, the world, the flesh, and the devil. Every one knew that there was in him something higher than earthly power; that the soul of man was here greater than the whole world. Each man, as the long hours of the day drew on, looked, knew that God was there; and said within his heart, "God

sitteth above the waterfloods, God remaineth King for ever."

Yes, it was not only human courage, will, and goodness that gave Elijah majesty. It was his faith in God. The man was possessed with God; behind him stood One whom none might see, but from whom streamed into His servant a spiritual might and inspiration. Elijah felt it; he knew that God had seized him, and he held to that faith with an intensity which made the man seem transfigured. This was the deep root of his courage, of his resolute will, of his scorn of all that man could do unto him, of the certainty which made him mock his foes, and call on all the folk of Israel to watch the falling of the fire before it fell. This, too, was the root of his calm; all the day long he waited, "like Teneriffe or Atlas, unremoved"; silent till the end; wrapt in his mantle, wrapt in faith; at peace in the midst of turbulence. Yet within him, born too of faith in God and hatred of oppression, of fierce contempt of evil, and love of his mighty thought that God was one and undivided — there was also that without which nothing great in morals, nothing sublime in spiritual life, is ever wrought — passion at white heat; not bursting like that of the priests of Baal into wild cries, fanatic self-torture and maddened dancing, but self-restrained



### *ELIJAH ON CARMEL*

and ruled, cool at its centre, mastered by will, inspired by a cause which was not in its origin his own, exalted by an idea the source of which was beyond himself in God. It was this which carried him through that day of long endurance, which broke forth at last in his rushing appeal, which sounds in his solemn prayer, and which, when the fire fell, is heard at last in his cruel cry, as the savagery of the desert seized upon the man, and he flung aside the sword of the Spirit for the sword of vengeance — “Take the prophets of Baal,” he cried; “let not one of them escape.”

This was the man — great, but not of the first greatness; mighty in strength, but falling into the weakness of Horeb, when the noble hour was past; having a moral majesty in opposition to evil, but, when evil was conquered, reverting to cruelty; splendid in faith, self-forgetful in defence of righteousness, but losing faith, and thinking too much of himself, in the hour of reaction.

If ever the hour come when you stand alone with God against all your society, call to your side the powers that Elijah had, and ask them to arm you for the fray; gather your courage together and confirm it with the thought of God and the cause of man for which you fight. Let your will be steady and unmoved; not driven by impulse, but fixed firm

on principles; guided by worthy thoughts, thoughts of which you are so deeply convinced that to part from them or betray would seem to you the death of soul and body. And, because these principles must seem to you righteous, live the blameless life, so that when you fight for them you may feel that you are worthy to buckle on their sword and to wield it in the battle day. Nay, live so always, that when the hour comes in which you shall stand alone, men may naturally claim you as God's champion against wrong. Nor can you wage your warfare steadily, joyously, unless you have faith in God, in whom the right and loving thing must always triumph; who, if you must die with your work undone, is sure to continue your life with Him, and to take care that your work will be continued upon earth. It is a mighty power a man has when he believes that God is with him. He is lord then of all the world and of himself; there is that behind his will which gives it steadiness; there is that behind his courage which gives it the calm which is the guard of courage. He can endure as well as fight through the long day of life; for he will have that most noble passion, which does not flare but burns with a heart of unquenchable fire—the love of God which, in a great hour of decision, lifts him into the conquest of the world;

*ELIJAH ON CARMEL*

but which now, in better days than those of Elijah, does not, when the crisis is over, cry against the conquered, "Slay them at the brook of Kishon," but like Jesus, "Their sins are forgiven; let them sin no more." This is the Christian warrior — the heroism of Elijah, in loneliness, for God; the love of Jesus, in victory, for man.



## II

### ELIJAH ON HOREB

*“ And Elijah went to Horeb, the mount of God. And he came thither to a cave, and lodged there ; and behold the word of the Lord came to him, and He said unto him, What doest thou here, Elijah ? And he said, I have been very jealous for the Lord God of Hosts : for the children of Israel have forsaken Thy covenant, thrown down Thy altars, and slain Thy prophets with the sword : and I, even I only, am left ; and they seek my life, to take it away. And he said, Go forth and stand on the mount before the Lord. And behold the Lord passed by ; and a great and strong wind rent the mountains, and brake in pieces the rocks before the Lord ; but the Lord was not in the wind : and after the wind an earthquake ; but the Lord was not in the earthquake : and after the earthquake a fire ; but the Lord was not in the fire : and after the fire a still small voice. And it was so, when Elijah heard it, that he wrapped his face in his mantle, and went out, and stood in the entering in of the cave.”*

I KINGS xix. 9-13.

WE have seen Elijah in his glory on Mount Carmel ; we shall now see him in the hour of his gloom ; we have seen him in his impas-

sioned action; we shall see him now on Mount Horeb in his reaction. Both were at a greater height than they need have been. The same work could have been done, and done better, with less violence. But it is not our business, in an age where there is but little expenditure of passion, either of noble joy or of wild regret, to complain of or to blame it in Elijah. I only say that it is not in the highest type of character. The man less led by impulse, less fond of denouncing, less intemperate, would have been stronger and steadier in will, and his work would have endured. The man who cared more at all points for his cause than for himself would not have allowed his religious passion to pass into the passion of a political foe, nor spoilt his day's work by the slaughter of the priests. The man whose work was to last, and who had no doubt of its truth, would not, for so long a time, have despaired of God, of man, of his nation, and of himself.

He had risked his life against the court and the idolatrous queen; he had slain, in his passionate excitement, the priests of Baal, and on his head the wrath of Jezebel now fell. When he heard her message — that she would slay him instantly — the threat grasped his heart at the moment when his departing violence left him exhausted. Fear and

### *ELIJAH ON HOREB*

deep depression seized him. He fled for his life into the wilderness, and prayed that he might die. "It is enough; now, O Lord, take away my life; for I am not better than my fathers." But helped by a vision, he fled further; forty days in wild flight, the story goes that he traversed the wilderness. It is a strange, sad, human episode.

We know the scenery of the place where he finally rested; of Horeb, the mount of God, the summit of which was called the Mount of Moses. Beneath his eyes, as he stood at the entrance of the cave, lay the vast desert, a rough and stony plain, with dry and infrequent herbage. Infinite silence, infinite awe, as of the presence of an eternal God, encompassed him. Near at hand were the great mountain walls of red granite, deep hewn valleys below splintered gorges; and above, the naked peaks piercing the heaven, in which the stars burned in depths even more vocal of infinitude than the desert. Tradition still points out, as tradition chose, the small and lonely valley, the upland level under the summit, where Elijah rested. One cypress tree stands now in its midst, and a well and tank are open near the ruined chapel which covers the rock in which the cave was set. It is one of the silentest places in the world, as hidden as it is silent. The granite cliffs lap it round on all sides but one; that

side where Eljiah stood, when, in the dawn, he came forth to hear the voice of God.

It was a scenery worthy of his character and reflecting it. The peaks were not more austere or more majestic than he. The granite cliffs were not more hard and unyielding than he was towards evil kings and evil priests. The speechless desert, the boundless sky, the unity of solemn impression made by both, were not more silent and more illimitable than his thought of the unity, eternity, and majesty of Jehovah. The wildness of the place, its savage air, its aspect of apartness from men, were not more wild than the aspect of Elijah, not more isolated, not more rude. "Alone," "alone," "alone," thrice he repeats that word about himself in this chapter. All his story marks his solitude. He is seen only for moments, at intervals, rushing from the desert to take part in human life; and then snatched away, as it seemed, by the Spirit of the Lord. His figure was that of one who lived in deserts. Long dark shaggy hair streamed over his shoulders, his face was as it were the face of a lion, and his feet swift as a stag. A rude cloak of sheepskin, knit round his loins by a strip of cowhide, only covered him; and at times he rolled it up and smote with it, or girded it up and ran, or wrapped, as here, his face in it. Its rough-



ness made it a symbol of the man; it became what his sword was to the hero of romance — it had its owner's personality; it carried his spirit after death. In this way it became the heritage of Elisha, and made him recognised as the successor of Elijah. Elijah was thus the very impersonation of the wilderness, of the place where now he stood. The scenery and the figure were not two, but one. The scenery and the character were equally at one.

History repeats itself, and Elijah was repeated in John the Baptist. He, too, was of the desert, and of the character of the desert. Isolated, appearing at intervals out of the solitudes to reprove wicked kings and Pharisees; dressed like Elijah; dressed, too, in Elijah's spirit, austere, unflinching in word and thought, the denouncer and the overthrower, the wielder of the axe against the trees that brought forth no fruit, the preacher of a fierce righteousness — John spoke also midst the scenery of the desert, standing on the rough, stone-strewn plains near Jordan, where only the dry reed rustled in the wind, where the Spirit of the Lord dwelt in the silence, where the voices of the world were all unheard.

Both stand together, mighty, stern, granite-hewn, and the manner of their teaching is alike. We hear its character in the strong wind that rent the mountains, in the earthquake that shook down the

hard-hearted cliffs, in the fire that devoured, and in the terror that came on the wings of these vast outbreking forces. Elijah's prophecy, John's preaching, burnt up, and shattered, and made tremble the souls of men. The centuries as they passed by had tamed the times, and John's thunderstorm and fire did not destroy the bodies of men; but Elijah practised what he preached. His sword slew the priests of Baal, his hand anointed the three great avengers of the God of Israel. Whether the story of what he heard be symbol or vision, it is plain it grew out of and imaged the character and deeds of Elijah, as the purging fire and the axe of which John spoke grew out of, and imaged, his character. It is a manner which impresses mankind, as the earthquake and the hurricane impress them, but the question is: What was its success, how did it work upon men? Was its result equal to the noise it made?

The result of Elijah's and the Baptist's work was, on the whole, failure. Their characters certainly lived, and became powers in mankind; but the aims they strove for were not attained, and the influence of their effort died away. The following of John fell down to a few ascetics; the multitudes that went out to him listened to him and forgot his call. Elijah's work seems to have lived only in Elisha,

and in the fierceness of the persecution he encouraged — a persecution which did evil, and which was as transient as the wind and fire on Horeb.

The result on the men themselves is equally failure. This passionate and raging excitement suffers its own reaction. It was no steady flame; it flared, then fell into exhausted ashes. Nothing seems higher than Elijah's faith on Carmel, nothing fiercer than his slaughter of the priests; but few things are more despondent than his cry on Horeb, few things more melancholy than his egotistic view of his own loneliness. Nothing seems more impassioned in faith than John's first preaching to the crowds at Jordan, but few things are more sad than his half-despairing message from the prison to Jesus. There was no uniform fervour, no quiet, unshaken faith. The temper of the denouncing prophet is not the temper of the great man, of the veteran soldier, of the leader.

There is something still worse than failure which befalls this type of teacher. It is querulous egotism. In sincerely great men like Elijah and John, who feel their nothingness before God, the egotism has its grandeur. It is a revelation of character, and when the character is great, we are even grateful for it. But still we feel that a complaining speech like Elijah's lowers the type, though it may not lower

the man. "I, even I only, am left. I have been very jealous for the Lord God, and — they seek my life to take it away." Is this, we ask, the voice which thundered on Carmel, which met Ahab, and reproved him face to face? It is a pity and a wonder that one so strong when beyond himself, should be so weak when within himself. Yet the weakness is contained in the strength, for the strength is more violence than strength; and the violence and the weakness are both forms of egotism.

We seem, as we study the character, to see and hear our own prophets who denounce and cry and storm in the name of justice and mercy; our religious teachers who talk of hell, and of God as if He were a God of vengeance, and of wicked men as if they had no good in them, and of their opponents as if all their work were bad; whose only way of meeting evil is to abuse it, drag it forth, and call down fire from heaven upon it. We seem to hear our writers who spend whole books in calling the world accursed, mostly fools, shams, hypocrites, and villains; who cannot see the other side of wrongs, or the goodness by which all evil lives. We seem to listen to the social reformers who would, like the wind that rent the rocks, and the earthquake and the fire, pass over the whole of society and shatter it to pieces without the slightest power in them to

build it up again; for the spirit in which they work, the manner of speech and thought to which they have accustomed themselves, never built up a community, and never could build it up. We seem to listen to many a father of a family and many a mother, whose method of training their children to serve God and man is the method of the storm and the fire, who drive slaves and not souls to God; who make morality into a religion, who are unforgiving as a law of nature, who attach to each infraction of their will a curse or a punishment. The result of it all, whether in religion, in politics, in reforming the world, in family life, is failure — dead failure. Men are driven away, thrown into the opposite camp, irritated, made enemies of the just and good thing, when it is recommended in that fashion. Parents are disobeyed, their influence for good destroyed. After a time, justice is turned into injustice, morality is injured, love is replaced by hatred. The wrath of man works not the righteousness of God.

Moreover, all this evil is doubled by the egotism of such teachers. They have not, for the most part, the rugged truthfulness or the wild genius of Elijah or John, nor the force of their intense belief in God. The only intense belief they have is in themselves; and when misfortune or failure or the world's scorn

comes upon them, they wail and complain as if God Himself and humanity were destroyed because they are injured. "I, even I only, am left," is ever on their lips. "I have been very jealous for God or for man, and it is a foul shame that I am overthrown;" and they take to unbelief in God or abuse of man, and call themselves neglected prophets; having neither courage, nor courtesy, nor dignity; and, by their want of both, lowering the cause or the faith they began to preach.

When we turn to Jesus we see a prophet of another type. He made no disturbance. His voice was not heard denouncing in the streets, save when He spoke against the cruel hypocrite. He did not abuse sin, He forgave it. He did not threaten the wrongdoer, He told him that he was a child of God. His God was one not of vengeance, but of unspeakable love. He did not slay men but saved them. When outward power rose against Him, He made no forcible resistance to it. "Do what you will," He said, "to the body, but my soul is free." When inward evil met Him, He attacked it by displaying the opposite good. His words were not the roaring wind, the shattering earthquake, and the devouring fire, but the gentle breeze, and the refreshing dew, and the still small voice of love. It was not the desolate solitudes of Horeb and the stony plains of

### *ELIJAH ON HOREB*

Perea in which he preached and wherein His teaching was symbolised, but in the garden of the Jewish world, by the blue Lake of Galilee, where the smiling corn-fields, the soft-eyed flowers, and the sweet meadows made the loveliest spot in Palestine. No contrast could be greater, no words more different from those of Elijah and John, than: "Come unto me all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest."

Yet, where John and Elijah failed, He succeeded. That tender power entered like a monarch into the heart of the human race, and men bowed before it as corn before the steady wind of summer. Sin and wrong, cruelty and injustice, spiritual misery and hardness of heart, evil beliefs and superstitions, idolatry, immorality, and luxury, melted before it like snow from a mountain side; and all the flowers of goodness, of love, faith, hope, and joy, sprang up in the soul of man. He died; worldly success was not His in His life; but the vaster power was His which endures in the soul,—the true success of love; eternal in the reverence, affection, and inspiration of mankind.

Nor was the personal contrast less remarkable. There is not one trace of selfish egotism or of complaint of men. "I, even I only, am left" was impossible on the lips of Jesus. When all was over in

this world, His faith in God's love remained the same as when crowds collected round His first joyous preaching in Galilee. He said once He was alone, but not yet alone, for the Father was with Him; and concerning those who left Him in the hour of His distress, He had no words but those of love. Though He was slain by evil men, He believed still in humanity. He had His hour of despondency like Eljah and John, but it lasted only an hour; and He passed out of it quiet, faithful, collected, supreme over temptation, and as tender as before, without one thought of self: only of the Father, whose cup He was to drink, and of man, for whom He was going to die. There is the real strength, there the abiding power, there the true majesty of man; and it is rooted — as all that is noble in God and man is rooted — in love; love so deep that self is forgotten.

There, my people, is your power hidden; there, in loving-kindness, in the winning way, the gentle word; in pity and mercy, in belief in the good of man and in soft searching for it; in forgiving sin, not in denouncing it; in bearing, believing, hoping, and enduring all things, in absence of self-thought and self-glory, in making excuse for men; in never knowing whether you are alone, or misunderstood, or right to be angry, or jealous for your own dignity —



### *ELIJAH ON HOREB*

because you are so rapt in the love of the Father and of men, His children, that you never can abide within yourself at all. The storm and the thunder pass away, the earthquake is satisfied at last, the fire is quenched; but the sunshine goes on, and its soft and genial powers build up the world and keep what is built in that joy of being, which alone is permanent. The spirit of Elijah rises and falls, flows and ebbs, and is at last dried up; but the spirit of Jesus is a steady and perennial stream. Wrath is human, love is divine; wrath is weak against sin, but tenderness and forgiving are its real conquerors. Anger and bluster, the storm of denunciation, the earthquake and the fire, pass away: the Lord is not in them. But love and pity and the still voice of gentleness never fail. The might of God is in them.

Lastly, I will make this meaning I have given to the story personal. I do not think that the writer was conscious of that meaning when he made the still small voice, or as it has been amended, the whispering of a sweet and cooling breeze, follow on the earthquake and the fire: for the vision ended by a contradiction of the Christian thought, ended in the invocation of the sword of Hazael, Jehu, and Elisha against the enemies of Jehovah. I think the writer meant these magnificent outbursts of the

destroying pomp of Nature only to be the introduction of the presence of Jehovah. But there is no reason, after we have made that confession of criticism, why we should not use the tale to point a principle which the writer did not mean. The vision is poetry, and I speak of it, finally, as symbolic of a frequent story in the life of the soul.

The storm of passion ravages us within; the fire of sin has burnt up the very life of our spirit. We have reeled to and fro, like men in earthquake, at those terrible times in our life when trouble and temptation have smitten us with mortal pain. All is lost, we cry. We take refuge in the desert; we think all earthly solitude less deep than the solitude which reigns within; we accuse God as a deceiver, and man as a betrayer. "I am left alone with my fierce passion, with my overwhelming sin, with my measureless trouble. There is no voice nor any that answers the voiceless agony of my heart."

Yes, often we stand in the desert, among the granite mountains, alone, indignant, tormented, as the night is passing away, as we have been called forth from the cave in which we have passed our time of misery. We scarcely see the dawn which is breaking on our solitude. Before us passes by in fierce retrospect all that we have sinned and suffered,

*ELIJAH ON HOREB*

the tempest, the earthquake, and the fire. "God is not in them," we cry; "only myself." And as we make the confession we hear the still small voice, "My child, turn at last to me. Come to my heart. Give up thyself; lay thy will in mine, for mine is righteousness. Forget thyself; remember love alone."

Soft as the dew it falls — that voice — upon the parched heart, cooling as the whispering wind; and the new creation, the new life begins. Its streams have broken into light. In a few years your whole heart and soul, thoughts, actions, and emotions, will be changed. For, still and small and full of peace as the voice of God is in that hour, it is not a voice which lulls us to sleep. When it has made peace within, it changes to the trumpet note, such as calls sleeping soldiers in the dawn of the battle-day. "What doest thou here, Elijah?" — that is its cry — "here in the desert, far from men, as if thy mourning was greater than the mourning of all mankind — here, lost in jealousy and complaint, and wailing over the dead past? This is not the place where one should be, who is the son of God, the brother of Jesus, the comforter, by right of sorrow, of men and women. Thou hast no special sorrow and no special righteousness. There are thousands whose sorrow needs thy consolation. There are thousands who have

not bowed, any more than thou, their knee to the false gods of the world; but who have not fled from their work like thee. What doest thou in the desert? Go forth from it and labour; console, exalt, and free mankind. Go, and be the martyr of truth and love. In martyrdom thou wilt forget thyself."

THE PROPHET AND PROPHECY



## THE PROPHET AND PROPHECY

*"For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given: and the government shall be upon his shoulder: and His name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, the mighty God, the everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace. Of the increase of his government and peace there shall be no end, upon the throne of David, and upon his kingdom, to order it, and to establish it with judgment and with justice from henceforth even for ever. The zeal of the Lord of Hosts will perform this."*

ISAIAH ix. 6, 7.

WE have all heard, at one time or another, that chorus in the *Messiah* in which Handel, using the words of the text, has realised the passion and the power of Isaiah, prophesying hope, redemption, the Just Governor, the Prince of Peace.

The covering darkness that shrouds the earth, the pain of the prophet's heart as he looked on his country, find their echo in the solemn and weighty harmonies of the great musician. When the prophetic note changes, and light begins to break upon Isaiah's gloom, Handel keeps in sympathy. Slowly the music grows into the dawn, slowly the prophetic

passion grows, for the people who walked in darkness had seen a great light; till at last, music and prophecy, Handel and Isaiah, both rising with the might and volume of their sun-uplifting thought, surmount the last height; woe and pain are left behind; above them is the unfathomable heaven and the praise of God; below them spreads the landscape of the future drenched in the light of faith and joy. Then, expression can wait no longer; in a moment the great chorus rushes into thunder-melody, and Isaiah into words of thunder-praise. "Unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given: and the government shall be upon his shoulder: and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, the mighty God, the everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace." What was this? It was the glow of all noble hearts in Judah concentrated into one heart. It was the hope of ten thousand souls breaking into voice on the lips of one man. It was that the unformed and passionate thought, which had floated vaguely in the people, was now shaped, animated by the life of genius, and sent forth, instinct with the fire of God, to kindle the souls of men. Let me trace, first, its origin; secondly, its passage through the prophet's heart; and lastly, its analogy in our own life.

(1) What was the origin of the prophecy, that is, of this outburst of Truth? The words have of



course to do actually with the history of the time at which they were spoken. Their first meaning is historical. When we have found that meaning, we shall understand how they may have a relation to the future.

When they were first spoken, Judah had been a long time suffering from outward foes and inward evil. Invasion had come and gone, with its devastation, and was again expected. Outward misfortune was, moreover, deepened by inward immorality. Injustice had been rampant in the city, luxury, greed, and falsehood. The whole head of the land was sick, and its heart faint. Darkness had covered the earth, and gross darkness the people.

And man had long desired some rest, some satisfaction. There were a few, Isaiah's remnant, who had sought it in prayer and hope; but, finding no answer, had fallen into despair. Others, unlike these, had tried to find it in the licence described in the first chapter of this book, in the unrestrained doing of their own will; and they had their reward—the immitigable reward of doing one's own will—double restlessness, the consuming fires of satiety, the tyranny of unbridled desire. There must have been many, even among these, who, for very weariness of doing their own will, cried out at last: "Give government, O God; let us find the

peace of duty, nay more, a Prince of Peace." Yes, a Prince of Peace; because, for the most of men, demands of duty must inhere in a lawgiver, or in some conception — such as Humanity, or the State, or universal order — to which personality is sure to be given by the mass of men and women. Some impersonation is at the back of every conception of duty and law. And certainly in Israel this was always the case.

The moment, then, these troubled folk in Judah began to think of duty, they were led by their own minds to the desire of a perfect king. And when once the thought of a person was outlined in their feeling, the conception of peace through the doing of duty was not enough for them. Man needs something more than the command and call of abstract duty; and it is the great mistake and failure of all our modern ethical movements that they either neglect or deny this something more. Man desires to obey through love, and in order to love, desires to know some one who will love him; and who is the source of duty; that is, who is Righteousness Himself. Side by side, then, with the desire of doing what is according to law, the heart demands a holy lawgiver who can be loved; whom, if we can love, we are delighted to obey; and whom also we love because he is everything in character which in our highest,

tenderest, holiest hour we wish ourselves to be. In that alone, the purest peace is found and made our own. It is in the midst of all-harmonising love that duty is done without strife and pain; without the disturbance of self-interest, or the anger of self-will.

I do not say that any of the weary and seeking spirits in Judæa reasoned in this fashion. That reasoning is not made while peace in love of right is being pursued. It is only made when, having attained it, we look back on the path we have trodden. At the beginning of our pursuit we do not even know at what we aim. Our ideas, like those the Jews had now, are vague, floating, and indefinite; the prophetic longings of children, dim images of what shall be. But I do say that the ideas, though formless, are passionate. The nation thrills with them; and there are a thousand examples of similar national conditions in history since the world arose into intelligence and aspiration.

This was the voiceless passion among his people which now reached Isaiah's receptive heart. He felt the whole of this incoming tide of feeling smite from without upon his soul. He had the same emotion also in his own soul; and he had, what the people had not, the power of shaping this passionate feeling into form. And God Himself now

came into the matter. Inspiration was poured into Isaiah. There is a wonderfully noble symbolic description of this in that chapter where he sees in vision an angel bring a live coal from the altar and touch his lips therewith. The great Inspirer who has breathed in all poets since the world began, added His shaping power to His servant's, and the whole of the dim aspirations of the people, and with them also the passion of his own heart, rushed to Isaiah's lips in expression; till, like a torrent let loose from a cavern, poured forth the words, and all that follows them: "Unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given." "The perfect king whom ye desire; whose law is righteous to obey; whom ye may love, and who will be the prince of your peace—a Prince of Peace has come; but yesterday he was born a child."

Of whom did he speak? for all these so-called prophecies are not foretellments of events to come. They are, either the record of existing facts, along with the hopes founded upon them; or, secondly, the statement of truths which, from their universal import, can be applied to all periods of history. In this case there was a fact at the back of the prophecy. It was the birth of Hezekiah; and the prophet, borne away on the hopes he cherished for Israel, saw in him the perfectly righteous and just king to be, and

sketched, as Tennyson has sketched in his portrait of Arthur coming again, the reign of peace. "Of the increase of his government and peace there shall be no end, upon the throne of David and upon his kingdom, to order it and to establish it with judgment and justice, from henceforth even for ever." As the enkindled words ran through the people, they embodied all their hopes; they gave form to all their undefined aspirations; they seemed to make a perfect king a possibility, and the coming of a just kingdom real. Thus they gave a basis to life; and, in the faith they encouraged and established, action towards the far off perfection grew and multiplied; until the reign of Hezekiah actually became one of those parentheses of vigorous reformation which save a people, for a time, from decay and ruin. Alas, it was but for a time; nevertheless, the prophecy was not lost. It is one of those many poetic ideals which again and again, in every nation, have entered into the imaginative and spiritual life of mankind, and have done more for its progress and its evolution than all the science which has ever been wrought out since the beginning of intelligence.

Such is the history of a prophecy; and the main lines of its history are the same for all prophecies, and all great poems.

(2) Now, the next subject appears, and it is one of

more personal interest. What is the story, in all this, of the prophet's own heart? He has been swept away in his inspired excitement; and his vision of the young prince, Hezekiah; his vision of him as the perfect monarch; rose higher than the reality ever became. He went beyond himself; he sang a song of hope prosaic prudence would have censured. Himself in higher life, a spirit within him seemed to take up the strain he had begun, and carry him, not unconscious, but in a wonderful thrill of joy — in which he felt his life as he had not commonly felt it — into a sphere where for once he saw, not darkly, but face to face, the perfect vision of a king of men. This was no supernatural excitement; such visions, such upliftments of the soul, come to us, in different degrees, in different rarity, in life. They are the visits we pay to the mountain tops; the hours when, in purer air, we see the world beneath our feet, the infinite heaven above, and the furthest ranges of the landscape of mankind. Then it is that we behold the divine pattern of things, the archetypes, the perfections which we are to pursue.

But we return from these exalted hours, and when Isaiah came back to his common life, and saw what he had written, he must have felt as we often feel when we see what we have dreamed and written in

our exalted hour — at first astonished, and then dismayed. “What have I done?” he might say. “This is no true picture of a Jewish prince. It is not what will be, but what ought to be. Hezekiah will not be that. I have led my people wrong; I have given hopes which will never be fulfilled.”

The same reaction which we find in the work of a number of poets, which, for example, we find at its height in Shelley, befalls the Prophet; and he suffers in the reaction as much as he had rejoiced in the exaltation. It was the same, we remember, with St. Paul, as he tells us in that strange personal account in the Epistle to the Corinthians, of his being caught up into the third heaven, and of the buffeting which followed it. We cannot tell how many who have prophesied in passion have felt in bitterness the possible untruth of their truths. While all the world is ringing with their words of hope, they are beaten down, in the hour of their revulsion, into utter loneliness, hating even the hopes they have raised, doubting of their own truth; until, like Isaiah, when he felt that Hezekiah could never realise the outlines he had sketched — they have asked in misery: “Have I been most false or most befooled when I felt most true or most wise? When my heart was on fire with the wants of my people, my imagination most awake and pure, my being lost and

found again in what seemed the innermost light of God — was I then most deceived, most weak, most miserable?" No — no — that was not the end; and we carry this bit of human experience further. The prophetic ardour, which is in truth the very fire of God in the soul, lifts the Prophet and the Poet out of that depression, and he reaches the quiet middle point between exaltation and reaction.

In this case, the subject of the prophecy was changed, but the prophecy remained. If it were not true of Hezekiah, it did not follow that it would not be true of another king — of one who should have no earthly throne, but who, by justice and truth and love, should rule in the hearts of men; whose government should be for ever, because it was at one with righteousness; whose power should be immortal, because it was at one with love.

"No," said the voice of God in his heart. "No, my prophet, this is no falsehood you have spoken. This is your moment of perfect truth. You have gone beyond the present, through the path of the present, into the far off future. Hezekiah will but partly fulfil your words, but his very imperfections of fulfilment point to the perfections of another. Look onward still. See far off that glorious light rising on the horizon of the centuries. It is indeed the Prince



## *THE PROPHET AND PROPHECY*

of Peace, the King of Justice and of Love: the Messiah of the Nations."

So joy, and a deeper joy, came back through sorrow to Isaiah, and having swept through this cycle of feeling, he let the passage rest, and, glad in his heart, cried out: "It is not I alone who have spoken this; it is my God within me."

That is the true prophetic feeling — then and now. The same things have happened a thousand thousand times. Similar things happen again and again in our own experience. There are hours when men and women feel that their tongue utters words which are not of their common self, but of their future self in higher place; when they are at one with that ideal of themselves which dwells in God. Then they do not care what their sadder self may say, nor what the world says about their prophecy, nor that in the special case from which their prophecy upgrew there has been failure. Ridicule and unbelief fall back, like blunted spears, from their shield of faith. They know that they are true, and that they have spoken truth, for they feel that God has spoken through them. The special form of their truth may decay or fail, but the truth itself remains. It may have only partial fulfilment in the present, but God will wholly fulfil it in the future.

(3) Lastly, there is yet another analogy, an analogy

of the whole course of our life to that of the history of which we have now spoken. As long as men and women live they will go through something similar to that which the nation of Judah now went through. We reach at first the restlessness of Judah, its cry for law and peace. We enter into life, feeling the sting of impulse. At first it is no pain, but pleasure. We call it aspiration, enthusiasm, desire to succeed and move the world. But sooner or later, under the growth of self, a great part of it changes into the desire to do and to get our own will. I do not so much blame it then. It is natural enough; and the only way we can find out that the change of eagerness into the passion of self-will is wrong, and that the eagerness is killed by the change, is by experience of its results.

And the experience comes. We weary of seeking our own will, because the only unweariable thing is love; and to seek our own will only drives love away. "Me this unchastened freedom tires," said a great poet, and he expressed the longweariness of humanity and its cause. Then we desire vaguely some One to whom we can say: "Guide me, rule me, give me the peace of duty done." Then we shake away the prayer, and try again the region of self-will. To and fro we wander, but all the time the desire for a true king in the heart grows deeper; the

## *THE PROPHET AND PROPHECY*

desire for the peace of just government within. At last, what came to Judah comes to us. Darkness descends on our life; gross darkness covers us. Sorrow invades the heart like the Assyrian host. The fields and hamlets of the soul are desolated. Our garments are rolled in the blood of trial; the battle of mental trouble is with confused noise; the pain of unsatisfied passions and cravings is with burning and fuel of fire. Anarchy is declared within. We cannot bear it. We are passionate for rest. The passion is at first formless, but it grows stronger and stronger; we must have some rule, some law, some obedience within; the cry of all the people of Judah is our cry.

It is then that the prophet part of our nature, the voice within which speaks so often to us; which tells forth to us the truths of life; which prophesies of the perfection of God; cries to the whole nation of the soul, and to all its wearied, warring, and restless citizens — “Child, you need a King; some one to obey, some one to love, some one to whom you may submit your will.” “Yes,” we answer, “I want one whose ways and thoughts, whose life and character, whose strength and tenderness I can so reverence and love that every craving I have ever had shall be lost in the one craving — that I may be at one with Him in obedience and in love. Then I shall find, in living His life, and in doing His com-

mands, and in dying His death, rest to my soul, union with the Father, immortal love of righteousness, and immortal doing of right. Even now I hear His voice: "Come unto me, all who are weary and heavy laden, and I will give you rest." Yes, we hear His call to take His yoke of lowly duty done for love of God and man; and it is the same at root as the old prophet's cry, "Unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given." Both are the prophecy to a soul in anarchy of just and noble government, and of peace through government.

It is with joy we take it to our hearts, with sometimes a joy more exalted than can be supported. Life is not the unbroken conquest that we hoped. We sometimes wonder, in our depression, if the prophet voice in our soul were true. But then, as with Isaiah, the depression passes, and we spring into faith again. What has been in us of the kingdom is only a part of what will be. The full hopes of the soul are in the future; the full perfection of the government of God in us, of our peace, of the immortal glory of love in us, are yet to be; but they are as sure as life. We must wait till the whole world is redeemed. You surely would not have your perfect bliss alone, or apart from the rest of men. When peace is universal, then in each it shall also be perfect.

THE MESSAGE TO BARUCH



## THE MESSAGE TO BARUCH

*"The word that Jeremiah the prophet spake unto Baruch the son of Neriah, when he had written these words in a book at the mouth of Jeremiah, in the fourth year of Jehoiakim the son of Josiah king of Judah, saying, Thus saith the Lord, the God of Israel, unto thee, O Baruch ; Thou didst say, Woe is me now ! for the Lord hath added grief to my sorrow ; I fainted in my sighing, and I find no rest.*

*"Thus shalt thou say unto him, the Lord saith thus : Behold, that which I have built will I break down, and that which I have planted I will pluck up, even this whole land. And seekest thou great things for thyself? seek them not : for, behold I will bring evil upon all flesh, saith the Lord : but thy life will I give unto thee for a prey in all places whither thou goest."*

JEREMIAH xlv. 1-5.

THIS is the last word, the postscript, as it were, to the roll of Jeremiah's prophecy, and it is steeped in trouble and despair. Most of us know the story: the impassioned denunciations of Jeremiah in the Temple court, the indignation of the officers of the Temple, the prophet's imprisonment and gloom, the comfort of Baruch's presence, the relief they found, through expression, in writing

down the prophecies concerning the fate of the city, the vain hope that reading them to Jehoiakim would bring about his repentance, the impatient burning of the book by the lawless king, the horror of Baruch at the deed, the rewriting of the whole at Jeremiah's dictation, and then, when all was finished, this last personal prophecy, half of warning, half of comfort, to the timid and sorrow-stricken scribe: "Thus saith the Lord."

It is the picture of a patriot's grief in times of national change and ruin, and the worst of his grief was hopelessness. For, living with a prophet who saw into the heart of things, he knew, when king, priests, judges, and people were violating all the laws of true national life, that nothing could avert the blow which Babylon already threatened. It was coming on all men in Jerusalem, on his own hopes, on the hopes of youth and womanhood, of the noble and the base — a common overthrow. Jerusalem, the joy of the whole earth, was doomed.

Then further thoughts arose, thoughts which seemed to shake the very foundations of his faith in a righteous Ruler who was lost to him, if He had made all men or anything for nought. Here, as it were in a moment, God's work of centuries was being blotted out. All the glorious history which had begun in Abraham, and was carried on so



## *THE MESSAGE TO BARUCH*

greatly through Moses, David, Hezekiah; which Solomon had sung, and Isaiah blown to all the winds of heaven through his silver trumpet — was this the end, this the impotent conclusion? Where, then, was God? What sort of a Being was He? If all His work be vanity, is He not Himself vanity? It is a difficulty and a sorrow which has beset patriots for their nation, and men for themselves, again and again when ruin falls, in unavoidable disaster, on a great people or a good life. Has God made all things for nought? Is He nought Himself, that He permits this evil?

What did Jeremiah, a man wise by sorrow, wiser by living with God, think about this? The problem was fairly placed before him; what answer did he give? Not all we need, no doubt; but Jeremiah was not the man to shirk a difficulty, and when Baruch laid this trouble before his master, his master answered in the name of God. And this was the stern comfort — “Thus saith the Lord, Behold, that which I have built up will I break down, and that which I have planted will I pluck up, even this whole land.”

Do we find in it any consolation?

Well, first, it is always some comfort when things are made clear; and if we are miserable, it is a blessing to know that God does not disallow our

misery. "Yes, my child, this is tribulation. I do not evade your complaint nor palliate your pain." It was so Christ spoke: "In this world ye shall have tribulation."

Again, there are men who, when a country is on the verge of destruction, sit calmly by and prophesy smooth things, throwing over the national misery a cloud of rose colour, making the ruin picturesque. It was this many a false prophet did when Jeremiah saw clearly the fall of Zion. We can imagine the passionate wrath at these men which made the prophet's patient sorrow keener. For the only chance the nation had, was in recognising its terrible condition, and these smooth-tongued liars lulled it into a blind security. "What!" might Jeremiah have said, "is there none who sees that we are rushing through the rapids, and that we shall be soon over the cataract?"

It was then, in that time of falsehood, that the prophet heard God's voice in his heart, and told His law; and all suspense and lies were done away. "Yes," said God, "these are times of ruin. I am destroying, rooting up; I bring evil upon all flesh." This is the rigid truthfulness of this book. That austere revelation of reality which is heard in the words of all true prophets of whatever race, is the voice of God as the Lord of law. "There is

justice," it cries, "and it will have its way. What you have sowed, *that* you shall reap; and the harvest has now come."

I hold, when we are in the midst of evil, that this is one of the few comforts worth having — to be told, without palliation, without modification, that the time of punishment is here; to know and understand the worst. For then we have our lesson. We see that to get on the side of law is our business, and our salvation; not our salvation from punishment for the past, because that must be exacted; but our salvation from doing any more that for which justice punishes. Once we know where we are clearly, know that we are utterly wrong — why, then we know also clearly where we ought to be, if we are to be utterly right. And that knowledge, if we have any manliness in us, any elements of recovery, is our best consolation; for then we spring up to take our punishment, and to change it into a new national or individual life.

And even if we cannot do this, if a full overthrow is to be our nation's fate or our own, why, anything is better than persuading ourselves that we are good when we are evil; just, when we are unjust; noble, when we are base; destined to a splendid future, when we are doomed to immediate overthrow. No, if we are to die, let us leave off evil and lies, even in

the jaws of death. Better to perish bravely in harness having at last come to ourselves, than to be slain writhing in impotent sorrow in a coward's hiding place; better, if we are a man like Baruch, to understand that the times are evil, and to give up seeking for pleasant things, content to die quietly at our post in clear consciousness, than to have destruction overtake us unprepared, in the midst of a false, blind, and luxurious life; to meet the fate of Jehoiakim, and to deserve it, "thrown out of the gates of the city, buried with the burial of an ass."

This then is the duty of all statesmen, prophets, and the rest who can see national evils, or individual ill. "To tell the truth, to palliate nothing of the mischief, not to let one grain of the sin escape." It is the best way to help wrongdoers. It is a stern but a wise comfort to give those who mourn for or suffer by the wrong. Very likely, those who give it will meet something of the fate of the prophet; they will have to bear the persecution which follows those who disturb the careless ease of men. But that will make but little matter. The kingdom of the prophets is not of this world. And yet the thing they do is the best thing for the nation or mankind. Ignorance of evil is the privilege of the child. Knowledge of evil is the fate of the man. Battle with evil, when he knows it, is the duty of the man; and

### *THE MESSAGE TO BARUCH*

conquest of it is his great inheritance. But before he conquer evil, he must know it. Therefore I say that to all the human souls that are worth their humanity, there is no comfort in the evil times of their nation greater, however austere it be, than to hear God saying: "Yes, I am destroying. The time has come; I will bring punishment upon all flesh."

And the whole principle is just as true of a personal life. When the young man passes out of the shelter of home into the midst of the world, he thinks it will be an easy thing to live for goodness. In the sheltered life he has led he does not know the truth of things, nor what is true of his own character. What is God to do with him? To protect him from all temptation? To keep him by a miracle free from wrong? So, he would die a child, in everlasting infancy. No progress, no manhood, no useful life would be his lot. Very differently does God act, who wishes for soldiers and men to serve Him. God puts an end to his early life, his ease, his quiet faith, his ignorance of wrong. Temptations beset him; the atmosphere in which he moves blurs the sharp lines of right and wrong; his faith becomes first confused, then battered on all sides; and he finds at last that, if he is to keep true, life must be one constant watch through storm, and continual

combat; nay, that he must embody before him the evil of the world, and never, till death, make peace with it.

It is a bitter disillusion at first, a hard and sorrowful hour. But let it be some comfort at least that God does not prophesy smooth things to us, that He has made it as plain as the light in the sky that if we would be His children, we must go through pain, and endure many of His destructions; that we may often have to suffer far more than the guilty, since we shall have, if we are His, to suffer for the guilty. It is true, in so doing, we shall have immortal joy within, the inward rapture of love perfecting itself in love; but we shall also have less and less of escape from outward grief and pain. There is no mincing of the matter. The very truth is told us. And that is a consolation worthy of a man's gratitude. It was so that Christ felt it. "Now is my soul troubled: Father, save me from this hour. Yet for this cause came I unto this hour." And so ought we to feel it. For this cause came we unto this suffering.

What are we to do? To sit down and weep; to sit down and sleep; to enter the false Paradise of false pleasure and wild passion? — or to redeem the spot of savage soil, where the thorns tear and the thistles sting, and to win it from the waste; and

*THE MESSAGE TO BARUCH*

when we drop the spade and die upon the ground, to say: "I have sown and ploughed and tended. God give the fruit of the harvest to my fellow men. Lord God of work, receive my spirit"? That is the true gladness of life; and to know and love the sternness out of which it grows, that is consolation. And now the second shred of comfort given to Baruch is contained in the first. It was God Himself who was the destroyer. ✓

In all destruction and passing away there is one thought bitterer than all the rest, a thought which has driven many that began with religion into materialism — that these are the work of an evil being. It is abominable to believe (and the belief has been the root of endless abominations done in the name of religion) that we or the world are handed over to the power, however limited, of evil. For, ultimately, such a faith degrades our conception of God; and when we worship Him under a degraded conception, all other conceptions are degraded by it. The worship of a mean, false, capricious, stupid, selfish, or cruel God makes our view of history, of humanity, of our society, our home, and of all that we do, mean, false, cruel, indifferent, scornful, limited, and dull. And it is vile conceptions of God of this kind, and therefore vile conceptions of humanity, that have made half of the materialism of the present

day. Some of us complain of materialists, of their hardness, their selfish theories, their bitterness! Have we ever asked ourselves what we have made them suffer when they were young, with our religions, with our God; and how far their bitterness is not the same kind of bitterness which a man has towards women, or a woman towards men, when, having an ideal love, it has been rendered vile by treachery? Have our theories of God's character, and our cruel doctrines about man, turned that which was to the young enthusiast his highest ideal, into the basest clay? Who knows whether many, who claim to be the favoured children of God, have not sown broadcast in the souls of men the materialism which now makes them scorn religion, which has turned it into a curse to humanity?

Half our sadness is taken away if we accept the prophet's statement, and say that it is God Himself that has wrought the ruin we deplore. Shall there be evil in the city and the Lord hath not done it? is a vigorous statement, and it may be made into a dangerous doctrine, but it is all the same the very truth. It is a comfort to believe that it is personal love and goodness which destroy, not malice, or spite, or jealousy, or desire of self glory.

Baruch saw his nation perishing, and he was miserable thereat. God could not save the nation



## THE MESSAGE TO BARUCH

without violating His own moral law; and to violate law is to cease to be God. But though He could not save, He gave this comfort to His servant, that Jerusalem was being overthrown by goodness, that love and justice were uprooting its stately tree. It was not that evil was overcoming good, it was that good was putting an end to evil, and bringing good to sight. But even this answer was, or seemed, pain in itself. For it suggested the thought that all God's previous work was vanity. "Thou art the Destroyer; yes, but if so, if all Thy past labour be unproductive, then I have lost Thee, my God, as I worshipped Thee of old. I find only an idol in Thy place whom my heart rejects, my reason despises, and my conscience abhors." But God replies: "When the harvest has come, the tares shall be destroyed." But why? "That the wheat may be gathered in; and when the harvest of one field is laid by, I sow with its produce a hundred fields."

We look only at what is destroyed in the days of destruction, for the pain of the destruction is then close and tyrannous, and will let us see nought but itself. We are not quiet enough in midst of national or personal grief to judge correctly, or to look to the future; and it would be inhuman if we were. But when the day of desolation is past by, and the

realm of our sorrow is exhausted, then we ought to be able to see that there is another side to things, and understand what Baruch heard:—

“Behold, what I built I destroy; what I planted I uproot.”

We forget in the pity of the destruction that God has been the builder, that at other times in history this other expression is true: “Behold, what I destroyed, I build again; what I uprooted I plant once more.” God was the builder; He will again be the builder. Men, save for a chosen purpose, do not pull down that which they have set up with care; neither does the Father of men, whose reason we possess. If He destroys it is for new building; and He builds the new with the stones of the old.

Nay more, may not the truth be better put? What if all this which is destroyed be only the scaffolding, not the real building; what if behind the ruins of that which in our blindness we thought the edifice God has been raising for us, and for the ages, a mighty temple?

It seems that that is true. Only the evil of the Jewish nation perished in its awful overwhelming. What remained was the good: and that was indestructible. But we should not have seen or known the good had not the destruction swept away the vain shows of useless things. Though Samaria fell, though Jerusalem was sown with salt, yet that great

## *THE MESSAGE TO BARUCH*

religion, on which a greater stands, endured. The unity of God was rooted in the world. Noble Jewish lives have fixed into outward fact the glory of moral conduct; the prophets have made the truths of God's righteousness, justice, pity, tenderness and sovereignty at one with the human soul. These and many more eternal things are ours for ever. This is the temple built by God for the Jewish race within the scaffolding which Babylon overthrew. It is the same with the great world. Nation after nation seems to perish, but the ideas they were given to develop are built into the being of the race; make it more complex, capable of fulfilling more functions, and therefore of more progress. The scaffolding is pulled down, and then we see the building; the temple of humanity remains, built by God and for God within the ruins of the past. Greece was uprooted, but the real building which she made by God's power is fairer than her ancient Parthenon, and the nations worship in it still. Rome perished, but the temple which her law and order and sense of duty built has sent its power and its law into the life of the world. It was only the scaffolding which was overthrown. The building was disclosed when the scaffolding was uprooted. Nor is the same thought inapplicable to our individual life.

One thing, however, we must add to this conception, else it cannot be true—that the living souls who, in the midst of this weaving and unweaving, this destroying and upbuilding, have died or been slain, are not lost like seeds that have failed in the earth. They each had God as their Father, they each took their part in His work, consciously or unconsciously; but they were not sucked dry, and then cast away. They are alive now, and passing onwards in other lives, part of the invisible but living humanity. God is their Father still. Not a grain of all that is noble has been lost; there is not a shred of all the pain which has not borne its fruit. The great Humanity on earth, which is growing into form, has elsewhere its unseen portion advancing with itself. Humanity seems here an imperfect sphere, but it rounds away from our eyes into the eternal world; on the left into the past, on the right into the future: and the day will come when, orbed into perfection, we shall see it as a whole; and it will roll on its way in the midst of its own music, no longer still and sad, no more discordant; but, “in an undisturbed song of pure concert, aye sung before the sapphire-coloured Throne.” This is the Lord’s doing, we shall cry, and it is marvellous in our eyes.

Take these things therefore as your comfort in the

*THE MESSAGE TO BARUCH*

days of judgment. They are of little consolation, if you doubt them: they are mighty, if you believe them. When we believe them, a vision of such glory rises as eye hath not seen. Face to face with personal pain, enthralled and burdened by the pain of others, seeing all the woe of mankind in this great city present at the very destruction of a nation, who can sometimes help crying: "Ah, Lord God, hast Thou made all things for nought?" But while in our despair we take our harp to prelude woe, into the midst of the unspeakable sorrow sweeps the unspeakable joy that is behind the curtain of the dark. Our hand trembles, —

"We cannot all command the strings:  
The glory of the sum of things  
Will flash along the chords and go."



# ECCLESIASTES





## ECCLESIASTES

*"Vanity of vanities, all is vanity, saith the preacher."*

ECCLES. i. 1.

THIS is the keynote of this Book of Ecclesiastes, "Emptiness of emptinesses, all is emptiness." The world is like a cup drained dry. We are here, we cannot help it. Let us enjoy what we can, and endure the rest. The only question is how. But before we take up the subject we must date the book and touch its historical position.

It was written after the Persian monarchy had fallen, when the Jews were living under the rule of the Greek princes who succeeded Alexander the Great. The great mass of the Jews, indignant at being under a foreign rule, brought close to heathenism, which they now abhorred, were set into a violent intolerance of heathen folk and ways. They developed an eager and impassioned religious life; and this rose into great devoutness, and the spirituality which comes from martyrdom, when their

persecution began under Antiochus Epiphanes. Then began again the heroic times of Israel in the Maccabean rebellion. It was shortly before that period, about the middle of the second century before Christ, that the Book of Daniel was written. It was a short time previous to that writing, that the Book of Ecclesiastes was written under the name of Solomon. It is easy to see that it is not a religious, not a pious book. It is in direct opposition to the spirit of the Book of Daniel, and the question arises, "What was the source of the spirit of Ecclesiastes, of its doubt and indifference, of this cultivated contempt of the world, of this sense of the emptiness of life?"

Well, there were a number of Jews, a small but rich number, who were learned, and lovers of pleasure and beauty, who lived in beautiful and wealthy cities like Alexandria, and who fell under the fascination of Greek learning, Greek art, and Greek philosophy, at a time when Greece was no longer the grave and dignified leader of the intelligence and art of the world, but a commentator rather than a writer of thought, and a collector and critic rather than a creator of beauty. This class of Jews, either in opposition to the intolerant and severely ethical religion of their fellow countrymen, or weary of the nobler devotion and hopes of the prophetic

souls, — because these took their thoughts away from the present pleasure, and fixed them on vague hopes of a perfect future, — threw themselves into the full world which surrounded them; read the heathen philosophy, went to the heathen theatres, entered into the Greek enjoyment of life — books, art, commerce, feasts, pleasure, games, luxury, and women — with all the Jewish impetuosity and the Jewish intensity. They could not, however, get entirely rid of the Jewish conscience, of the sense of holiness, of the notion at least of a God of righteousness who demanded righteousness; and this grain of conscience is to be observed in the Book of Ecclesiastes. The rest of it is the production of a man who had, as a Jew, gone through the pleasure and the learning of the Greek, and come out, tired and exhausted, on the other side; and all the more weary and scornful because he was on the verge of old age. That is the history of the book. And its voice is the voice of those men and women in our society at the present day who are weary of life because of plenty, who can do everything they like and do it; who have no struggle, no poverty, no work, except to amuse themselves. It is also the voice of another type of comfortable people, who have time to read or write books; who have gone through philosophies and religions and sciences and politics and been

transiently excited over each; who have passed as cultivated persons through the arts, or played at the philanthropies of life, but who from beginning to end, have worked like amateurs, not as artists; who have had none of the beloved and enthralling charms that poverty and effort bring; all whose work has been as slight as their effort is easy; who think that they have felt and known all things, but who have never realised anything with intensity, or known anything to its recesses, for, if they had, they would have loved that thing; and if they had loved, even but once, they had never said: "All is vanity."

What a picture this book presents of this common type of folk! "Man gains nothing," it says, "from all his toil; nature brings him no delight; it swings in the same monotonous round: there's nothing new under the sun. The preacher once had pleasure in wisdom, but even that, he soon found out, was emptiness. He indulged his senses, that too was vanity. He was rich and had its pleasures — 't was vexation! He pursued knowledge; that too was absurd. 'T is better certainly to be wise than to be a fool; but then the wise man dies like the fool, and all is said. It is ridiculous; life is a poor play, yet we have to sit it out. We have indeed the will to live; 'twere better not to have it. At least we

can despise the thing; and that, perhaps, is our nobility. But even that is vanity. One thing comes after another, and folk call this succession good; but why is it good? The child that dies is better off than the man who has found out the illusions in which he lives. Therefore enjoy what you can get, and take no trouble about anything else."

"After all, evil is triumphant: the end of a man is the end of a beast. Snatch what you may of pleasure and good; soon you will be old and unable. Death is better than life, for it is rest; yet a living dog is better than a dead lion, for the living know that they are alive, but the dead know nothing at all. We must bend to God's will, for what else can we do? It is best to be prudent and moderate" — this is his counsel now he is old — "and to fear God, for then a man can enjoy his wealth easily. The strange things seen under the sun — the righteous destroyed by his goodness, the villain made prosperous by his villainy — tell you not to be too good or too wise or too eager; for all enthusiasm means nonsense and trouble. But what need to give this advice? It will not be taken, for the most of men are fools; and as to women, there is not one of them that has understanding: keep away from them. Yet try and not be too stupid or too wicked; that also leads to destruction. If all peace and happi-

ness. Indeed, we are sorely placed. Wherever we turn, we are victimised; the only chance is moderation, and moderation is dull. Moreover, there is death at the end; it is that which crowns life with vanity. The dead know nothing, the dead are forgotten, death swallows all our passions, all our joys."

"So there is nothing better than to get all the joy you can, always remembering that time and chance rule all things. Live with as little anxiety, as little eagerness, as you can. If you do too much good, you get no thanks for it; if you are bad, you get no thanks also; keep a middle path. Enjoy, young man, your life, but balance your enjoyment with the thought that God will bring you into judgment in this world. Think that old age, with all its pains, is at hand, and then silence and the grave. Vanity of vanities. And our last warning; do not be for ever writing books; don't waste your time with too much science, it is weariness. Above all, keep on the right side of law; obey nature; that is, observe God's commandments."

This was the cry of the sceptical Jew, and it is the cry — so unchanged is human nature — of much of modern life. It has no solution of our problems in it. What has it to do with the true solution? "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thine

heart, with all thy mind, and with all thy strength; and thy neighbour as thyself." And what has it to do with Jesus? He said the very opposite: "He that loveth his life, the same shall lose it; he that loseth his life, the same shall find it." And the nobleness of His view is in intense contrast to the ignominy of the other.

But we are not left to one parallel between that time and ours. There is another, a more pleasant one to make. It was about this time that there also arose, during the two centuries which preceded the birth of Jesus, a number of apocalyptic books, books of revelations, all of which had to do with the future; and one of their main elements, indeed we may say the chief aim and purport of them all, was to foretell, not only the deliverance of Israel out of their martyrdom, but the deliverance of mankind from evil. The overthrow of wickedness was at hand. A reign of holiness and love was coming on the earth. God would come, in power and glory; there should be a new heaven and a new earth. Under noble symbols, both of awe and beauty, this perfect state was represented; and the redeemed and purified Israel was to send its blessings over all the nations that should obey its God. The book called the Book of Daniel is such a book, and it is a product of this time. The Book of Wisdom, and

others in the Apocrypha, belong to this time also; and so does the Book of Enoch, which is quoted in the New Testament. And this last book, if not another of the same kind, is at the root of a good deal of the Book of the Revelation with which the New Testament canon closes; and especially of its visions of a regenerated world, of a new heaven, and a new earth, and a new Jerusalem. One and all dwell upon an ideal state, prophesy a good and glorious time for man, recognise his present suffering as the path to his future blessedness, thrill with hope and faith in his destiny, and are kindled with the thought of his continued life in a restored and glorious universe. The first clear mention of immortal life is in the Book of Daniel.

Face to face then, in that old society, with the declaration that all was vanity and misery and death in the world, face to face with the Book of Ecclesiastes, was the prophecy that the misery would end in joy; that the apparent vanity of the struggle was to end in a reality of peace; that the close of all was not death but an unspeakable richness of life; that what seemed decay and overthrow was but the process whereby the New Jerusalem, the perfect city, was to come to rejoice and heal the world.

This too, like Ecclesiastes, has its analogy in our modern world. Indeed, in history, we never meet



a luxurious and base society, or a society which has sacrificed its heart to the idol of the understanding, without also meeting, existing alongside of it, another society, living simply, and believing in noble emotions and impalpable ideas. And, alongside with our pessimism, exists a great progressive movement which prophesies in faith a just, free, and lovelier world. Even at the beginning of this century these two opponent elements were set before us by two poets. Byron's "boundless upas, the all-blasting tree," had stricken the whole of humanity with disease; and his hero, Childe Harold, goes through the whole of Europe, from Spain to Greece, with the eyes and the soul of the writer of the Book of Ecclesiastes. Face to face with him, and sounding another trumpet, one whose silver ringing has uplifted the sorrowful martyrs and workers of mankind, stood Shelley; and the spirit of the Book of Daniel and the Book of Enoch spoke again in the "Prometheus Unbound," which sang, in exultation, of the deliverance of men from the vulture of evil; of Nature restored to beauty, and of Humanity regenerated. What Shelley declared then is now begun, before our very eyes, in the prophetic movement towards a perfect state, which, in many varied forms and pervading all classes of society, makes the time in which we live so ideal, so excited, so

full, so kindled, I may even say, with joy — because its hope is so deep, its faith so strong, its love so expansive, and its sense of life so keen.

These are two sides of our society. Of course, there is a middle region, dwelt in by those who quietly and faithfully labour in the present, not in exhaustion, nor in excited hope, but in the still doing of duty; and these are blest, in their way, and bless, like rivers, gentle and full, the human race. But they do not belong to my subject now, and they need but little praise or blame. They are content and untroubled; but little tempted, and in little difficulty. Happy are they, if they do not settle too deeply down in the calm harbour where they lie, if they do not lose interest in mankind. But the others, who cannot be content, whose temper is such as to reach either scornful exhaustion or passionate hope — what of them in this twofold impulse of society? That is our question now.

First, let me say what cannot be too often said about these two tempers, when we consider them as national. It is an historic experience that when the spirit of the Book of Ecclesiastes is not confined to a mere class, but seizes on all classes in a people, that people is doomed to death. Pessimism, spread over the whole, means decay, and galloping decay. And this is no wonder, for it is the first-born child

of that selfish luxury and wealth that recognises no duty but its own pleasure; which, by its own confession, can have no life such as fills the heart and intellect with animation, for it says there is nothing worth doing, that all is vanity. Therefore, if you care for your country's enduring life, if you wish England still to minister to the progress of the world, if you would yourself be a living, growing, fruit-producing part of her; keep yourself apart from this degraded temper; let no touch of its sickly scorn, of its tainted indifference, weaken your intellect or disease your heart.

It is, on the contrary, the other temper which befits and exalts the soul. Live, since you must by your very nature live at one extreme or other, live for the noble faith of a perfect humanity in the future; live for ideal hopes, and die contending for them. Faith, not despair, be your leader. Then, in that deep and noble relation to all your fellow-men which is more enduring and passionate than any which belongs to friendship or home, you will be a power of joy, hope, and activity in your nation; you will ennoble and continue the worshipful life of England, even the universal life of man.

And, secondly, to make the matter more personal than national, there is this twofold temper in all of us who cannot lead the middle life of which I have

spoken. The impulsive nature tends, through exhaustion of impulses, towards the conclusion that the world is an evil farce; or, through the strengthening of noble impulses, towards the conclusion that the world is a battle, whose end is victory in good and sacred joy in life. Within us, in the silence of the soul, the battle of these two tendencies is joined, day by day, year by year. Which of them shall conquer is a solemn question; and it beats heaviest at the doors of youth, though youth does not hear its blow so clearly as age. How shall you have answered it when its knock is no longer heard, and it is death who knocks in its place? Which of the two shall have had the conquest when you enter the kingdom beyond the grave?

To ask the question, to suppose that it can be asked, means that life is not an affair of facile yielding, but of steadfast resistance. Almost at every step we are tempted to join the path which descends easily to the temper of those who say in age, "All is vanity." We are tempted through the weakness that is born of ease and wealth and pleasure; through the passion of getting our own way; through unbridled impulse. Luxury belongs perhaps to none of us; but the unchecked following of impulse, the resolution to have whatever pleases us, no matter whom we injure — no great wealth is needed to

create that spirit. It springs to its evil life in the poorest; and, wherever it is, it means selfishness, idleness, and decay. But after a time it wearies us to have our own wish; we are enslaved by our own desires; we pursue them when all the pleasure is gone out of them. We are like drunkards who hate to drink, and yet must go on. Weak self-injurers and injurers of others, degraded even when we pursue after moderation, having drained our desires dry, we sit by the fireside of the heart, looking at the burnt ashes of life, and saying: "How mean, how vile it all is; what folly, what a puppet-play," and when death runs down the curtain we die like a fool. That is the natural end of it. There has been no love of any one but ourself, and where there is no love there is sickness and shame of life.

And this is the end of one who once aspired to drive the horses of the sun, on whom life shone like a conquering banner! What a close for a child of God, a brother of Jesus, an heir of immortal life! May it be another story which we shall have to tell, when the snow of age begins to drift, and we sit by the fireside within our heart, and think of the days gone by. Seek simplicity, the life of contented duties, duties set on fire by love of God and man. Abhor luxury with all your soul. Beneath her fine garments lies a loathsome body and the claws of a

foul beast; but under the homely robes of love the very body of beauty breathes, the home and source of joy that cannot be ashamed. Seize love, and keep her. She will free you from the curse of doing only your own will, thinking only of your own self. Every impulse, every noble passion, will then not be crushed, but curbed; not made cold, but heated to a white heat by restraint — restraint which, inspired by love, is immortal freedom. The cry of “Vanity of vanities” is lost in the inspiration of a loving life, in its unbroken animation, in the life of God Himself within you. Yours will be undying hope and faith for man, a noble and worthy age. Death will be the door of life, and the whole character of God your endless joy.

Lastly. There is yet another cause for this cry of vanity of vanities. It is disillusion. We begin upbuoyed by dreams, by hopes that have the eyes of the dawn, by faith in God and love of man. Images of the golden year of humanity are with us, visions of perfection. Our youth is as sweet with love and beauty as a garden of roses in the summer noon. Suddenly that happens which turns it all to blackness and misery. Deceived or betrayed; finding lies where we thought all was truth; hate or meanness where we trusted in love and believed in nobleness; we are cast out into a desert of disillusion. Vanity

## *ECCLESIASTES*

of vanities, we cry, all is emptiness and vileness. I have been a fool; I have nothing to hope for, nothing to believe in, nothing to care for; the pain I bear alone proves that I am alive. I keep it, but deadly indifference were better. To be cool and chill and careless, there is peace. The vain show will soon be over. Vileness of vileness, all is vile.

Many of us have known it, and there is no healing for it at first, but getting to the bottom of it, and tasting its very dregs, to their last bitterness, with iron resolution. But, when it has been realised, it is time for that reserved strength which is in all of us, and which is indeed the Spirit of God our Father, to awake and prove its power. We are not born to be beaten in this fashion by life; we are not here to take the coward's part, and because we suffer, to surrender. We are not here to pass into the idleness of misery, or into scorn of life and mockery of effort. We must stand in the evil day, for love and its beauty, in spite of the betrayal of love. We must say: "God is in heaven and in me. I'll cling to Him and His hopes, though I die for it. Man is on earth and with me: I'll live for him, though every dream I have seems to be destroyed. Whatever is wrong, love must be right; and I will live for love."

This is the right medicine. It heals the worst dis-

illusion, the blackest misery. Slowly, as you love righteousness, which is God; as you love man by giving up thought of your personal pain to look after the pain of others; — the beauty of life will return to you, not the visionary fairness of youth, but a more enduring, more beloved beauty. And with beauty, interest in the world, joy in nature, are re-awakened, charm is restored to humanity, intensity to all things; for indeed — now that you love everything but self — the whole life of God, in all His infinity, all that He is in man, the universe that He embraces, and all His rapture in it, is beating in your heart. This is victory; not vanity of vanities, all is vanity; but fullness of fullness, life of life, perfection of perfection.



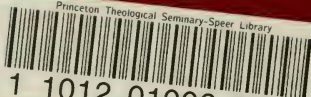


<del>JAN 1 1978</del>			
JAN 1 1978			
<del>JAN 1 1978</del>			
GAYLORD			PRINTED IN U.S.A.

PRINTED IN U.S.A.



Princeton Theological Seminary-Speer Library



1 1012 01006 8007